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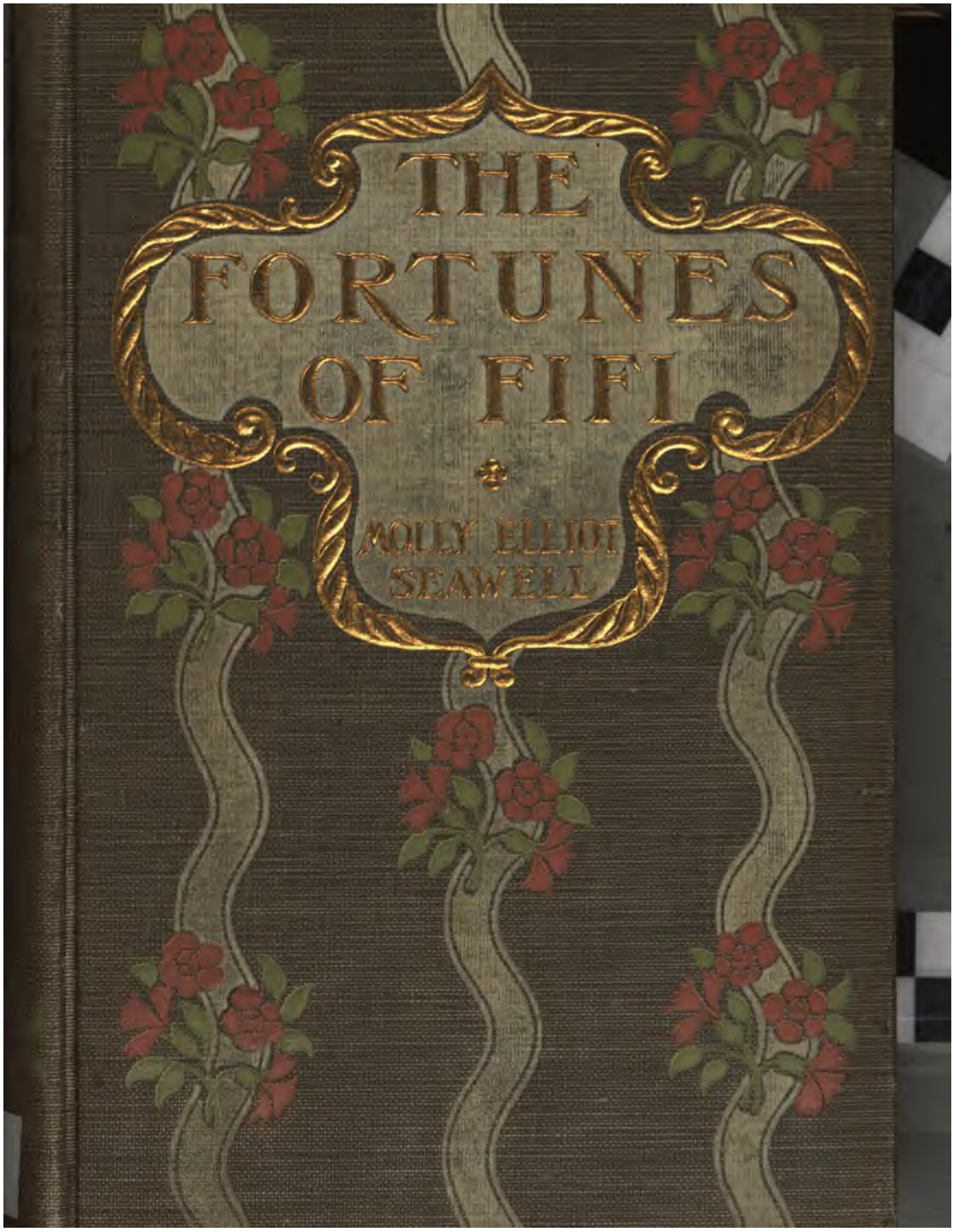
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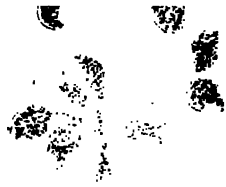

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THE FORTUNES OF FIFI

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MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL

[illegible]

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
T. DE THULSTRUP

INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

THE

FORTUNES OF FIFI

BY

MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL

The Author of Francezka
The Sprightly Romance of Marsac
Children of Destiny

THE ILLUSTRATIONS BY
T. DE THULSTRUP

INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The Imperial Theater	1
II	Number 1313	31
III	The Grand Prize	51
IV	Courtship and Cribbage	73
V	A Parcel of Old Shoes	90
VI	The Blue Satin Bed	113
VII	A Most Imprudent Thing	140
VIII	An Old Lady and a Limp	161
IX	Back to the Black Cat	180
X	The Pope Wins	200
XI	By the Emperor's Order	222

THE FORTUNES OF FIFI

THE FORTUNES OF FIFI

CHAPTER I

THE IMPERIAL THEATER

Although it was not yet six o'clock, the November night had descended upon Paris—especially in those meaner quarters on the left bank of the Seine, where, in 1804, lights were still scarce. However, three yellow flickering lamps hung upon a rope stretched across the narrow Rue du Chat Noir. In this street of the Black Cat the tall old rickety houses loomed darkly in the brown mist that wrapped the town and shut out the light of the stars.

Short as well as narrow, the Rue du Chat Noir was yet a thoroughfare connecting two poor, but populous quarters. The ground floor of the chief building in the street was ornamented with a row of gaudy red lamps, not yet lighted, and above

them, inscribed among some decaying plaster ornaments, ran the legend:

THE IMPERIAL THEATER.
DUVERNET, MANAGER.

Imperial was a great word in Paris in the month of November, 1804.

Across the way from the theater, at the corner where the tide of travel turns into the little street, stood Cartouche, general utility man in the largest sense of the Imperial Theater, and Mademoiselle Fifi, just promoted to be leading lady. The three glaring, swinging lamps enabled Cartouche to see Fifi's laughing face and soft shining eyes as he harangued her.

"Now, Fifi," Cartouche was saying sternly, "don't get it into your head, because you have become Duvernet's leading lady, with a salary of twenty-five francs the week, that you are Mademoiselle Mars at the House of Molière, with the Emperor waiting to see you as soon as the curtain goes down."

"No, I won't," promptly replied Fifi.

"And remember—no flirtations."

"Ah, Cartouche!"

"No flirtations, I say. Do you know why Duvernet made you his leading lady instead of Julie Campionet?"

"Because Julie Campionet can no more act than a broomstick, and—"

"You are mistaken. It is because Duvernet saw that Julie was going the way of his three former leading ladies. They have each, in turn, succeeded in marrying him, and there are three divorce cases at present against Duvernet, and he does not know which one of these leading ex-ladies he is married to, or if he is married at all; and here is Julie Campionet out for him with a net and a lantern. So Duvernet told me he must have a leading lady who didn't want to marry him, and I said: 'Promote Fifi. She doesn't know much yet, but she can learn.'"

"Is it thus you speak of my art?" cried Fifi, who, since her elevation, sometimes assumed a very grand diction, as well as an air she considered highly imposing.

"It is thus I speak of your art," replied Cartouche grimly—which caused Fifi's pale, pretty

cheeks to color, and made her shift her ground as she said, crossly:

"Everybody knows you lead Duvernet around by the nose."

"Who is 'everybody'?"

"Why, that hateful Julie Campionet, and myself, and—and—"

"It is the first thing I ever knew you and Julie Campionet to agree on yet—that the two of you are 'everybody'. But mind what I say—no flirtations. Duvernet beats his wives, you know; and you come of people who don't beat their wives, although you are only a little third-rate actress at a fourth-rate theater."

Fifi's eyes blazed up angrily at this, but it did not disturb Cartouche in the least.

"And you couldn't stand blows from a husband," Cartouche continued, "and that's what the women in Duvernet's class expect. Look you. My father was an honest man, and a good shoemaker, and kind to my mother, God bless her. But sometimes he got in drink and then he gave my mother a whack occasionally. Did she mind it? Not a bit, but gave him back as good as he sent; and when my father got sober, it was all comfortably made

up between them. But that is not the way with people of your sort—because you are not named Chiaramonti for nothing."

"It seems as if I were named Chiaramonti for nothing, if I am, as you say, only a little third-rate actress at a fourth-rate theater," replied Fifi, sulkily.

To this Cartouche answered only:

"At all events, there's no question of marrying for you, Fifi, unless you marry a gentleman, and there is about as much chance of that, as that pigs will learn to fly."

"So, I am to have neither lover nor husband, no flirtations, no attachments—" Fifi turned an angry, charming face on Cartouche.

"Exactly."

"Cartouche," said Fifi, after a pause, and examining Cartouche's brawny figure, "I wish you were not so big—nor so overbearing."

"I dare say you wish it was my arm instead of my leg that is stiff," said Cartouche.

He moved his right leg as he spoke, so as to show the stiffness of the knee-joint. Otherwise he was a well-made man. He continued, with a grin:

"You know very well I would warm the jackets

of any of these scoundrels who hang about the Imperial Theater if they dared to be impudent to you, because I regard you as a—as a niece, Fifi, and I must take care of you."

Cartouche had a wide mouth, a nose that was obstinacy itself, and he was, altogether, remarkably ugly and attractive. Dogs, children and old women found Cartouche a fascinating fellow, but young and pretty women generally said he was a bear. It was a very young and beautiful woman, the wife of the scene painter at the Imperial Theater, who had called attention to the unlucky similarity between Cartouche's grotesque name and that of the celebrated highwayman.

Cartouche had caught the scene painter's wife at some of her tricks and had taken the liberty of giving a good beating to the gentleman in the case, while the scene painter had administered a dose out of the same bottle to the lady; so the promising little affair was nipped in the bud, and the scene painter's wife frightened into behaving herself. But she never wearied of gibing at Cartouche—his person, his acting, everything he did.

In truth, Cartouche was not much of an actor, and was further disqualified by his stiff leg. But

the Imperial Theater could scarcely have got on without him. He could turn his hand to anything, from acting to carpentering. He was a terror to evil-doers, and stood well with the police. Duvernet, the manager, would rather have parted with his whole company than with Cartouche, who received for his services as actor, stage manager, and Jack of all trades the sum of twenty-two francs weekly, for which he worked eighteen hours a day.

The worst of Cartouche was that he always meant what he said; and Fifi, who was naturally inclined to flirtations, felt sure that it would not be a safe pastime for her, if Cartouche said not. And as for marrying—Cartouche had spoken the truth—what chance had she for marrying a gentleman? So Fifi's dancing eyes grew rueful, as she studied Cartouche's burly figure and weather-beaten face.

The night was penetratingly damp and chill, and Fifi shivered in her thin mantle. The winter had come early that year, and Fifi had taken the money which should have gone in a warm cloak and put it into the black feathers which nodded in her hat. Pity Fifi; she was not yet twenty.

Cartouche noted her little shiver.

"Ah, Fifi," he said. "If only I had enough

money to give you a cloak! But my appetite is so large! I am always thinking that I will save up something, and then comes a dish of beans and cabbage, or something like it, and my money is all eaten up!"

"Never mind, Cartouche," cried Fifi, laughing, while her teeth chattered; "I have twenty-five francs the week now, and in a fortnight I can buy a cloak. Monsieur Duvernet asked me yesterday why I did not pawn my brooch of brilliants and buy some warm clothes. I posed for indignation—asked him how he dared to suggest that I should pawn the last remnant of splendor in my family—and he looked really abashed. Of course I couldn't admit to him that the brooch was only paste; that brooch is my trump card with Duvernet. It always overawes him. I don't think he ever had an actress before who had a diamond brooch, or what passes for one."

"No," replied Cartouche, who realized that the alleged diamond brooch gave much prestige to Fifi, with both the manager and the company. "However, better days are coming, Fifi, and if I could but live on a little less!"

The streets had been almost deserted up to that

time, but suddenly and quietly, three figures showed darkly out of the mist. They kept well beyond the circle of light made by the swinging lamp, which made a great, yellow patch on the mud of the street.

All three of them wore long military cloaks with high collars, and their cocked hats were placed so as to conceal as much as possible of their features. Nevertheless, at the first sight of one of these figures, Cartouche started and his keen eyes wandered from Fifi's face. But Fifi herself was looking toward the other end of the street, from which came the sound of horses' hoofs and the rattle of a coach in the mud. It came into sight—a huge dark unwieldy thing, with four horses, followed by a couple of traveling chaises. As the coach lurched slowly along, it passed from the half-darkness into the circle of light of the swinging lamps. Within it sat a frail old man, wrapped up in a great white woolen cloak. He wore on his silvery hair a white beretta. His skin was of the delicate pallor seen in old persons who have lived clean and gentle lives, and he had a pair of light and piercing eyes, which saw everything, and had a mild, but compelling power in them.

Fifi, quite beside herself with curiosity, leaned forward, nearly putting her head in the coach window. At that very moment, the coach, almost wedged in the narrow street, came to a halt for a whole minute. The bright, fantastic light of the lamps overhead streamed full upon Fifi's sparkling face, vivid with youth and hope and confidence, and a curiosity at once gay and tender, and she met the direct gaze of the gentle yet commanding eyes of the old man.

Instantly an electric current seemed established between the young eyes and the old. The old man, wrapped in his white mantle, raised himself from his corner in the coach, and leaned forward, so close to Fifi that they were not a foot apart. One delicate, withered hand rested on the coach window, while with an expression eager and disturbing, he studied Fifi's face. Fifi, for her part, was bewitched with that mild and fatherly glance. She stood, one hand holding up her skirts, while involuntarily she laid the other on the coach window, beside the old man's hand.

While Fifi gazed thus, attracted and subdued, the three figures in the black shadow were likewise

studying the face of the old man, around which the lamps made a kind of halo in the darkness. Especially was this true of the shortest of the three, who with his head advanced and his arms folded, stood, fixed as a statue, eying the white figure in the coach. Suddenly the wheels revolved, and Fifi felt herself seized unceremoniously by Cartouche, to keep her from falling to the ground.

"Do you know whom you were staring at so rudely?" he asked, as he stood Fifi on her feet, and the coach moved down the street, followed by the traveling chaises. "It was the Pope—Pius the Seventh, who has come to Paris to crown the Emperor; and proud enough the Pope ought to be at the Emperor's asking him. But that's no reason you should stare the old man out of countenance, and peer into his carriage as if you were an impudent grisette."

Cartouche had an ugly temper when he was roused, and he seemed bent on making himself disagreeable that night. The fact is, Cartouche had nerves in his strong, rough body, and the idea just broached to him, that Fifi would have to go two weeks or probably a month without a warm

cloak, made him irritable. If it would have done any good, he would cheerfully have given his own skin to make Fifi a cloak.

Fifi, however, was used to Cartouche's roughness, and, besides, she was under the spell of the venerable and benignant presence of the old man. So she gave Cartouche a soft answer.

"I did not mean to be rude, but something in that old man's face touched me, and overcame me; and Cartouche, he felt it, too; he looked at me with a kind of—a kind of—surprised affection—"

"Whoosh!" cried Cartouche, "the Holy Father, brought to Paris by his Imperial Majesty the Emperor Napoleon, is surprised at first sight into so much affection for Mademoiselle Fifi, leading lady at the Imperial Theater, that he means to adopt her, give her a title, make her a countess or I don't know what, and leave her a million of francs."

Fifi, at this, turned her shapely, girlish back on the presumptuous Cartouche, while there was a little movement of silent laughter on the part of the three persons who had remained in the little dark street, after the passing of the Pope's traveling equipage.

Cartouche had not for a moment forgotten the

face of the one he recognized so instantly, but seeing them keeping in the shadow, and having, himself, the soul of a gentleman, forbore to look toward them, and proceeded to get Fifi out of the way.

"Come now," said he. "It is time for me to go to the theater, and you promised me you would sew up the holes in Duvernet's toga before the performance begins. It split last night in the middle of his death scene, and I thought the whole act was gone, and I have not had time to-day to get him a new toga; so run along."

Fifi, for once angry with Cartouche, struck an attitude she had seen in a picture of Mademoiselle Mars as Medea.

"I go," she cried, in Medea's tragic tone on leaving Jason, "but I shall tell Monsieur Duvernet how you treat his leading lady."

And with that she stalked majestically across the street and disappeared in the darkness.

One of the group of persons came up to Cartouche and touched him on the shoulder. It was the one, at sight of whom Cartouche had started. In spite of his enveloping cloak, and a hat that concealed much of his face, Cartouche knew him.

"Who is that pretty young lady with whom you have been quarreling?" he asked.

"That, your Majesty," replied Cartouche, "is Mademoiselle Fifi, a very good, respectable little girl who has just been made leading lady at Monsieur Duvernet's theater across the way."

Cartouche, although thrilled with happiness, did not feel the least oppressed or embarrassed at talking with the Emperor. No private soldier did—for was not the Emperor theirs? Had they not known him when he was a slim, sallow young general, who knew exactly what every man ought to have in his knapsack, and promised to have the company cooks shot if they did not give the soldiers good soup? Did he not walk post for the sleeping sentry that the man's life might be saved? And although the lightning bolts of his wrath might fall upon a general officer, was he not as soft and sweet as a woman to the rugged moustaches who trudged along with muskets in their hands? And Cartouche answered quite easily and promptly—the Emperor meanwhile studying him with that penetrating glance which could see through a two-inch plank.

"So you know me," said the Emperor. "Well, I

know you, too. It is not likely that I can forget the hour in which I saw your honest, ugly face. You were the first man across at the terrible passage of the bridge of Lodi."

"Yes, Sire. And your Majesty was the second man across at the terrible passage of the bridge of Lodi."

"Ah, was it not frightful! We were shoulder to shoulder on the bridge that day, you and I. Your legs were longer than mine, else I should have been across first," the Emperor continued, smiling. "Berthier, here, was on the bridge, too. We had a devil of a time, eh, Berthier?"

Marshal Berthier, short of stature and plain of face, and the greatest chief of staff in Europe, smiled grimly at the recollection of that rush across the bridge. The Emperor again turned to Cartouche; he loved to talk to honest, simple fellows like Cartouche, and encouraged them to talk to him; so Cartouche replied, with a broad grin:

"Your Majesty was on foot, struggling with us tall fellows of the Thirty-second Grenadiers. At first we thought your Majesty was some little boy-officer who had got lost in the mêlée from his command; and then we saw that it was our general, and

a hundred thousand Austrians could not have held us back then. We ate the Austrians up, Sire."

"Yes, you ate the Austrians up. Afterward, I never could recall without laughing the expression on the faces of my old moustaches when they saw me on the bridge."

"Ah, Sire, when the soldiers came to themselves and began to think about things, they were in transports of rage at your Majesty for exposing your life so."

The Emperor smiled—that magic and seductive smile which began with his eyes and ended with his mouth, and which no man or woman could resist. He began to pull Cartouche's ear meditatively.

"You old rascals of moustaches have no business to think at all. Besides, you made me a corporal for it. One has to distinguish himself to receive promotion."

"All the same," replied Cartouche obstinately, "we were enraged against your Majesty; and if your Majesty continues so reckless of your life, it will be followed by a terrible catastrophe. The soldiers will lose the battle rather than lose their Emperor."

The Emperor had continued to pull Cartouche's ear during all this.

"And where are your moustaches?" he asked. "And do you still belong to the Thirty-second Grenadiers? For they were the fellows who got across first."

Cartouche shook his head.

"I did not get a scratch at Lodi, your Majesty; nor at Arcola, nor Castiglione, nor Rivoli, nor at Mantua; but one day, I was ordered to catch a goat which was browsing about my captain's quarters; and I, Cartouche, first sergeant in the Thirty-second Grenadiers, who had served for nine years, who had been in seven pitched battles, twenty-four minor engagements and more skirmishes than I can count, was knocked down by that goat, and my leg broken—and ever since I have been good for nothing to your Majesty. See."

Cartouche showed his stiff leg.

"That is bad," said the Emperor—and the words as he said them went to Cartouche's heart. "Luckily it did not spoil your beauty. That would have been a pity."

Both the Emperor and Cartouche laughed at the notion of Cartouche having any beauty to spoil.

"And what are you doing now?"

"I am an actor, your Majesty, at the Imperial Theater yonder in this street."

"An actor! You! One of my old moustaches! What do you know about acting?"

"Well, your Majesty, if you could see the theater, you wouldn't be surprised that they let me act in it. A franc the best seat—twenty centimes for the worst—eating and drinking and smoking—and cabbage-heads thrown at the villain, who is generally an Englishman."

"But how do you manage on the stage with your stiff leg?"

"Very well, Sire. I am always a wounded soldier, or a grandfather, or something of the sort. And I do other work about the theater—of so many kinds I can not now tell your Majesty."

"And the pretty little girl is your sweetheart?"

"No, your Majesty; I wish she were. She is not yet twenty, and really has talent; and I am thirty-five and look forty-five, and have a stiff leg; and, in short, I am no match for her."

Cartouche would not mention his poverty, for he would not that money should sully that hour of happiness when the Emperor talked with him.

"What does Mademoiselle Fifi think on the subject?" asked the Emperor.

"She does not think about it at all yet, your Majesty. She was but ten years old when I took her. It was at Mantua. Your Majesty remembers how everything was topsyturvy in Italy eight years ago. One day I saw a child running about the market-place, calling gaily for her mother. The mother did not come. Then the child's cry changed to impatience, to terror and at last to despair. It was Fifi. The mother was dead, but the child did not know it then. She had no one in the world that I could discover; so, when I was started for France in a cart—for I could not walk at all then—I brought Fifi with me. She was so light, her weight made no difference, and ate so little that she could live off my rations and there would still be enough left for me. When we got to Paris, I hired a little garret for her, in yonder tall old house where I live, and Fifi lives there still. I made a shift to have her taught reading and writing and sewing, and never meant her to go on the stage. However, I caught her one day dressed up in a peasant costume, which she had borrowed, acting in the streets with some strollers—a desper-

ately bad lot. I carried Fifi off by the hair of her head—she had only been with them a single day—and frightened her so that I don't think she will ever dare to follow her own will again; but I saw that acting was in her blood, so at last I got Duvernet, the manager, to give her a small place. That was a year and a half ago, and to-day she is his leading lady."

"And you are not in love with her?"

"I did not say that, your Majesty. I said she was not my sweetheart; but I wish I were good enough for her. However, Fifi knows nothing about that. All she knows is, that Cartouche belongs to her and is ready to thrash any rogue, be he gentleman or common man, who dares to speak lightly to her, or of her, for, although the goat ruined my leg, my arms are all right, and I know how to use them."

"Fifi will be a great fool if she does not marry you," said the Emperor.

"Your Majesty means, she would be a great fool if she thought of marrying me—me—me! Her father was a Chiaramonti—that much I found out—and my father was a shoemaker."

At the mention of the name Chiaramonti the Emperor let go of Cartouche's ear, and cried:

"A Chiaramonti! And from what part of Italy, pray?"

"From a place called Cesena, at the foot of the Apennines. That is, the family are from there; so I discovered in Mantua."

"Do you know her father's Christian name?"

"Yes, your Majesty—Gregory Barnabas Chiaramonti. I have seen Fifi's baptismal certificate in the church at Mantua."

The Emperor folded his arms and looked at Cartouche.

"My man," he said, "I shall keep an eye on Mademoiselle Fifi of the Imperial Theater—likewise on yourself; and you may hear from me some day."

A sudden thought struck Cartouche.

"Why does not your Majesty go to see Fifi act to-night? The theater is in this street—yonder it is, with the row of red lamps. I put those lamps up myself. I am due at the theater now, and if your Majesty has not the price of the tickets with you for yourself and Marshal Berthier and General

Duroc"—for Cartouche knew both of these well by sight—"why, I, Cartouche, as stage manager, can pass you in."

The Emperor threw back his head and laughed, and motioned to Berthier and Duroc standing behind him to come nearer to him.

"Listen," he said to them—and told them of Cartouche's invitation, and accepted it with great delight.

Marshal Berthier's homely face lighted up with a smile at the notion of attending a performance at the Imperial Theater in the street of the Black Cat. General Duroc, silent and stolid, followed the Emperor without a word, exactly as he would have marched into the bottomless pit at the Emperor's command.

"But not a word to the manager until we leave the house," said the Emperor.

Cartouche, walking with the Emperor, led the party a short distance up the street to where the gaudy red lamps showed the entrance to the Imperial Theater. Duvernet, the manager, in his shirt-sleeves, was engaged in lighting these lamps. He called out to the approaching Cartouche.

THEATRE IMPER.

"Look here, Cartouche, this is a pretty business, if you have forgotten my new toga. You were to have a new one ready for me to-night—I can't feel like a Roman senator, much less look like one in that old rag of a toga I wore last night. It was made out of a white cotton petticoat of Fifi's, and she had the impertinence to remind me of it before the whole company."

"Hold your tongue," whispered Cartouche to the manager, coming up close; and then he added, aloud: "These are some friends of mine, whom I have invited to see the play as my guests."

The Emperor, a step behind Cartouche, fixed his eyes on Duvernet. No use was it for Cartouche to refrain from mentioning who his first guest was. Duvernet turned quite green, his jaw fell, and he backed up against the wall.

"My God!" he murmured. "The toga is a regular rag!" and mopped his brow frantically.

The Emperor evidently enjoyed the poor manager's predicament, and pushing back his hat, revealed himself so there was no mistaking him. Duvernet could only mutter, in an agony:

"My God! The Emperor! My God! The toga!"

"Duvernet," said Cartouche, shaking him, "you behave as if you were drunk."

"Perhaps I am—oh, I must be," replied Duvernet, continuing to mop his brow.

"Come, Duvernet," said the Emperor, laughing, "never mind about the toga. I am not going to eat you. I came to see my old acquaintance, Cartouche, whom I have known ever since we met at the end of a bridge on the tenth of May, 1796. And, although I have enough money to pay for myself and my two friends, I accept Cartouche's invitation to see the performance as his guests. He has promised us the one-franc seats—don't forget, Cartouche—nothing under a franc."

"Certainly, Sire," replied Cartouche. "But if Duvernet doesn't come to himself, I don't know whether we can have any performance or not; because he is the Roman senator in our play tonight—a tragedy composed by Monsieur Duvernet himself."

Duvernet, at this, brought his wits together after a fashion, and escorted the party within the theater, and gave them franc seats as promised. It was then time for Cartouche to go and dress, but Duvernet, not having to appear as the Roman

senator until the second act, could remain some time still with his guests.

Afterward Duvernet said that in the half-hour which followed, the Emperor found out all about theaters of the class of Duvernet's, rent, lighting, wages, and told him more than he had ever known before about his own business. But Duvernet was in no way reassured, and his complexion was yet green, when Cartouche, peeping through a hole in the curtain, saw him still talking to the Emperor —or rather answering the Emperor's questions.

The house was fast filling. It held only five hundred persons, and there were but one hundred seats where the élite of the patronage paid so much as a franc; and even these seats were filled. Fortune smiled on the Imperial Theater that night.

Behind the curtain, the agitation was extreme; the Emperor had been remembered and so had Berthier and Duroc. Everybody knew that the Emperor had recognized Cartouche, had walked and talked with him, had pulled his ear, and had come to see the performance as his guest—that is to say, everybody except Fifi. That grand lady, since acquiring the dignity of leading lady, always contrived to be just half a minute behind Julie

Campionet, her hated rival; but, also, just in time to escape a wigging from Cartouche. Cartouche himself, dressed as a centurion of the Pretorian Guard, was the coolest person behind the curtain, and was vigorously rearranging the barrels which represented the columns of the Temple of Vesta.

Julie Campionet, a tall, commanding-looking woman with an aggressive nose, sailed in then, arrayed as a Roman matron. After her came Fifi, tripping, and dressed as a Roman maiden. The air was charged with electricity, and both Fifi and the hated Julie knew that something was happening. Julie turned to the leading man, with whom she had an ancient flirtation, to find out what was the impending catastrophe.

Fifi, however, ran straight to the place where there was a hole in the curtain—a hole through which Cartouche had strictly forbidden her to look, as it was bad luck to look at the house before the curtain went up. Fifi was terribly afraid of signs and omens, but curiosity proved stronger than fear. She swept one comprehensive glance through the hole, and then, wildly seizing Cartouche by the arm, screamed at him:

"Cartouche! Cartouche! It is the Emperor! Give me my smelling-salts."

Instead of running for the smelling-salts, Cartouche shook Fifi's elbow vigorously.

"Don't be a goose, Fifi! The Emperor has come here as my guest—do you understand? And it is the chance of your life!"

But Fifi, quite pale under her paint, could only gasp:

"Cartouche, I can never, never act before the Emperor!"

"It isn't likely you will ever have but this one opportunity," was Cartouche's unfeeling reply.

"Cartouche, within this hour I have seen the Holy Father—and now the Emperor—oh, what is to become of me!"

"Get yourself superseded by Julie Campionet, who has a walk like an ostrich and a voice like a peacock," answered Cartouche rudely, "but who does not go about screaming like a cat because she has seen the Pope and the Emperor both in one evening."

Now, Julie Campionet warmly reciprocated Fifi's dislike, and was looking on at Fifi's doings and

gloating over the prospect of her failure. Fifi caught Julie's eye—and she would much rather have been flayed alive than oblige Julie by making a fiasco; so, instantly, Fifi recovered her composure and declared she never felt more at ease in her life, at which Julie Campionet's spirits sensibly fell.

Meanwhile, everybody, from Moret, the leading man, down to the old woman who acted as candle-lighter, treated Cartouche as if he had been a hero. Moret, who had given himself great airs with Cartouche, embraced him and told him he would never be forgotten by the members of the company, for whom he had procured such an honor. Julie Campionet would likewise have embraced him, if he had encouraged her, and did, in fact, come dangerously near kissing him on the sly, but Cartouche managed to escape at the critical moment. Duvernet oscillated between the stage and the theater, and made so much confusion that Cartouche requested him to keep away from the stage until his cue came.

In truth, but for Cartouche's self-possession, the Emperor's presence would have simply caused a terrible catastrophe at the Imperial Theater, and the

manager's Roman tragedy would not have got itself acted at all that night; but, by coolness and the assumption of authority, the curtain came up to the minute, the play began, and went through without a hitch.

As for Fifi, she acted as if inspired, and Julie Campionet saw her hopes of becoming leading lady vanish into thin air. Duvernet, in spite of two large rents in the toga made out of Fifi's petticoat, was a most imposing senator. In his dying speech, which bore a suspicious likeness to one of Corneille's masterpieces, his voice could be heard bellowing as far as the corner of the street of the Black Cat.

The Emperor sat through two whole acts and applauded vigorously, and when the curtain came down on the second act, sent for Cartouche, and paid the performance the highest compliments. Especially did he charge Cartouche to say that he thought Duvernet's death scene the most remarkable he had ever witnessed on or off the stage. And then he handed Cartouche a little tortoise-shell snuff-box, saying:

"It is not likely I shall forget you, Cartouche—that is, not until I forget the bridge of Lodi;

though, really, you should have let me over the bridge first."

Cartouche shook his head and spoke no word, but his stern countenance and his obstinate nose said as plainly as tongue could speak it:

"Your Majesty should not have been on the bridge at all."

The Emperor saw this, and looked significantly at his companions, who laughed. Then he continued:

"And this young lady, Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, I shall have some inquiries made about, and the result may surprise you. Adieu. Remember, you have a friend in your Emperor."

This was spoken at the corner of the street of the Black Cat. Cartouche, with adoration in his eyes, watched the figure of the Emperor disappear in the darkness. Then, being careful to note that there were no onlookers, he kissed the snuff-box, exactly as he had seen Fifi kiss her paste brooch when she was enamored with its splendors, and hid his treasure in his breast.

But Fifi saw it before she slept.

CHAPTER II

NUMBER 1313

It took Fifi a whole month to recover from the shock of delight which she had experienced on the night she had acted before the Emperor. Meanwhile, her little head became slightly turned, and she gave herself airs of great haughtiness to Julie Campionet, and Moret, the leading man, and even to Duvernet, the manager. Duvernet was one of those unfortunates who are the victims of their own charms. He was reckoned a handsome man, as beauty goes on the left bank of the Seine, and was almost invincible with young ladies of the ballet, milliners' girls and the like. When convinced that a deserving young woman had fallen in love with him, Duvernet felt sorry for her, and honestly tried, by reciprocating her passion, to keep her from throwing herself in the river.

By virtue of this amiable weakness, he had married in turn, as Cartouche had said, three of his leading ladies, and was only safe from Julie Cam-

pionet as long as Cartouche kept watch, like a wolf, over the lady. Separations always followed fast on Duvernet's marriages, and his three wives were in such various stages of divorce, that, as Cartouche said, Duvernet himself did not know exactly where he stood matrimonially. Of one thing only was he sure: that Fifi did not harbor designs upon him. And for this, and on account of her cleverness with her needle, which enabled her to convert her white cotton petticoat into a toga for the manager, in an emergency, Duvernet put up with her airs and graces.

Fifi tried a few of these same airs and graces on Cartouche, but Cartouche had the habit of command with her, and Fifi had the habit of obedience with him; so these little experimental haughtinesses on Fifi's part soon collapsed. Every night, when the performance was over, Cartouche would bring Fifi home, and after seeing that she was in her own little garret, retired to his, which was at the head of the stairs, and was the meanest and poorest of all the mean and poor rooms in the mean and poor lodging-house. But it was respectable; and to Cartouche, who had charged himself with the care of such a pair of sparkling dark eyes as Fifi's,

and such a musical voice, and such a neat foot and ankle as hers, this respectability was much.

If he had had his way Fifi would have been locked up in a convent and only let out to be married to a person of the highest respectability. But Fifi, in her own gay little obstinate head, by no means relished schemes of this sort, and was fully determined on having both flirtations and a husband, *malgré* all Cartouche could say.

The curious part of it was she could not construct any plan of life leaving out Cartouche. She had known him so long; he had carried her many weary miles, in spite of his bad leg, in that journey so long ago, when Fifi was but a mite of a child; he had often brought her a dinner when she suspected he had none for himself; he had taught her all she knew, and was always teaching her.

The men in the company often spoke roughly to the women in it, and oftener still, were unduly familiar, but none of them ever spoke so to her, chiefly because there was nothing the matter with Cartouche's brawny arms, as he had told the Emperor. And if the man Fifi married did not treat her right, Cartouche, she knew, would beat him all to rags; and how could she, husband or no husband,

settle anything in the world, from a new part in a play, to the way to make onion soup, without consulting Cartouche? So the question of a husband was full of complications for Fifi. At last, however, a brilliant solution burst upon her mind: she would have a great many flirtations—and then she would marry Cartouche!

Fifi was charmed with her own cleverness in devising this plan. It occurred to her at the very moment that she was putting on her hat with the black feathers to go out and buy herself a warm cloak. It was Christmas Eve, late in the wintry afternoon, and she had time, before she was due at the theater, to run around the corner to a shop where she had seen a beautiful cloak for thirty francs. She had saved up exactly thirty francs in the month since that stupendous evening when she had seen both the Pope and the Emperor.

The bargain for the cloak was quite completed; both she and Cartouche had examined it critically, had made the shopman take off a franc for a solitary button which was not quite right, and nothing remained but to pay over the thirty francs. It was a beautiful cloak, of a rich, dark red, lined with flannel—there was one like it, lined with cot-

ton-backed satin, which Fifi longed for—but when she mentioned the flannel lining of the first one to Cartouche, he had promptly vetoed the cotton-backed satin.

Fifi set forth gaily, feeling warm in spite of her thin black silk mantle.

It was near dusk and a great silver moon was smiling down at Fifi from the dark blue heavens. The streets were crowded and there was as much gaiety in them as in the finer faubourgs across the river. The chestnut venders were out in force, and on nearly every corner one of them had set up his temporary kitchen, whose ruddy glow lighted up the clear-obscure of the evening.

Around these centers of light and warmth people were gathered, sniffing the pungent odor of the roasting chestnuts, and spending five-centime pieces with a splendid generosity. The street hawkers did a rushing business; one could buy broken furniture, cheeses, toy balloons, cheap bonbons and cakes tied with gay ribbons, within twenty feet of anywhere. Three organ-grinders were going at the same time in front of the brightly lighted shop where Fifi's cloak was—for she already reckoned it hers. But alas for Fifi! Di-

rectly in front of the shop a crowd had collected around an Italian, who was exhibiting the most entirely fascinating little black dog that Fifi had ever seen. He was about as big as a good-sized rabbit, and was trimmed like a lion. Around his neck was tied a card on which was written:

Toto is my name, and I am a dog of the most aristocratic lineage in France, and I can be bought for twenty francs. See me dance and you will believe that I would be cheap at a hundred francs.

Fifi edged her way to where this angel of a dog was being shown by his owner, the Italian, and opening her arms wide, cried out in Italian:

"Come here, my beauty. Come here, dear Toto."

The dog ran to her, and placing his paws on her gown, gazed up into her shining eyes with that look of confiding friendship which only a dog's eyes can express. Fifi bent down, and Toto, putting out a sharp little red tongue, licked her delicate, cold cheek. Fifi was enraptured. Toto, with all his beauty, high descent and accomplishments, was not puffed up, but had a dog's true heart.

Fifi and Toto became intimate at once, to the delight of the crowd, as well as of Toto's master.

The Italian saw, in this evidence of the dog's gentle disposition, a better chance to sell him. A stout, red-faced woman, showily dressed, immediately offered eighteen francs for the dog. The Italian held out stoutly for twenty, and to clinch the matter, brought out from his clothes somewhere a complete ballet dancer's outfit; and in the wink of an eye Toto was doing a beautiful ballet, his skirts of pink spangled tulle waving up and down around his slim, little black legs, a low-necked bodice showing a necklace around his throat, earrings jangling in his ears, and his head affectedly stuck on one side, while he ogled the gentlemen in true ballet-dancer's style.

Oh, it was delicious! Fifi almost wept with delight as Toto pirouetted, his tulle skirts waving and his earrings tinkling musically. And when at last he retired and sat down, fanning himself with his skirts, Fifi's heart, as well as her hard-earned money, was Toto's.

The stout, red-faced woman was obviously impressed with Toto's value, for she immediately said to the Italian:

"Nineteen francs, Monsieur."

The Italian shook his head; and then, scarcely

knowing what she was doing, Fifi cried out in her musical, high-pitched voice:

"Twenty francs! Oh, Toto, you are mine!"

And holding her arms open, Toto jumped into them and was cuddled to her breast.

It was all over in a minute. The crowd had dispersed, and Fifi, with Toto in her arms, and his ballet dress in her pocket, where now only ten of her thirty francs reposed, was rather dumfounded at the success of her sudden venture. The cloak, of course, was out of the question—and what should she say to Cartouche? But the touch of Toto's little black paws gave her courage, and it was plain that her love for him at first sight was reciprocated. So Fifi started back to her garret with Toto, inventing on the way her replies to the wigging Cartouche was sure to give her.

She had scarcely got Toto into her room, when a rap came at the door, which Fifi recognized, and clapping Toto into the cupboard, she prepared to face Cartouche.

"Well," said Cartouche, walking in. "Where is the cloak?"

Fifi busied herself for a minute in lighting her

one candle, before she could summon up courage to answer, in a quavering voice:

"I did not get the cloak, Cartouche. That is, not to-day."

"Why not?" demanded Cartouche.

"B-b-because I spent twenty francs of the money upon—upon something I wanted more than the cloak."

"What is it?" asked Cartouche in a tone that made little shivers run down Fifi's backbone. "More feathers? Or was it a fan to keep you cool, when the snow is on the ground, instead of a cloak to keep you warm?"

"N-no. It was not a fan. And it is something to keep me warm, too, it is as good as a stove, sometimes."

"What is it?"

There was no mistaking the note in Cartouche's voice. Fifi began:

"It is—don't be angry, dear Cartouche—it is a little black—it is a little black—it is something alive!"

"Is it a little black ostrich? Or is it a little black giraffe?"

Cartouche came toward Fifi then, looking ex-

actly as he did the day he caught her acting with the strolling players on the street.

"Oh, no, Cartouche. It is a little—a little—I would much rather have him than a cloak. It is a dear little—"

But Toto himself revealed his species at that moment, by pushing the cupboard door open; and bouncing out, he ran to Fifi's protecting arms.

Cartouche was too much staggered to say a word, but Fifi, in the terrible silence, said timidly:

"He can dance, Cartouche—and—and stand on his hind legs like a little angel!"

"I see," cried Cartouche, recovering his speech and uncorking his wrath. "It is for a little black angel that can stand on his hind legs that you have sacrificed the cloak!"

"Yes," cried Fifi, likewise recovering her speech, now that the murder was out. "Toto is worth a dozen cloaks to me, and he only cost twenty francs. It is almost like buying a dear little child for twenty francs. I shall love Toto so much and he will love me back—we shall love each other better than anything in the world!"

Cartouche drew back a little as if he had re-

ceived a blow. He remained silent—so silent that Fifi was a little scared.

"You should see him dance," she said; and slipping Toto's ballet costume on him, she began to sing in a very lively manner:

Le petit mousse noir.

Toto, evidently thinking that he was meant by the black cabin-boy of whom the song treats, made his stage bow, and began his ballet dancing. And as it went on, Cartouche, in spite of himself, began to laugh. That was Fifi's triumph—and springing up, she, too, began to dance as well as sing.

She was only a half-starved little actress on twenty-five francs the week. She had no friend in the world but Cartouche, who was as poor as she was, but her heart was light, and her fresh young voice caroled merrily in the cold, bare little room. Cartouche sat, looking at her, and trying to frown; but it was in vain. He knew nothing of that newly-formed resolve in Fifi's mind, to have a great many flirtations and then to marry him; and then, a vast, a stupendous sacrifice came into his mind by which he could still get Fifi a cloak.

He had ten francs of his own, and there was the tortoise-shell snuff-box the Emperor had given him. Cartouche himself would have starved and frozen rather than take it to the pawnshop—but Fifi's cold and hunger was something else. There was no struggle in making the resolve, sacrifice for Fifi was no sacrifice to Cartouche, but there was a moment of sharp regret—a feeling that the only treasure among his poor possessions was about to be torn from him. Presently he said gently:

"Fifi, I have two bundles of fagots in my room and a sausage, and I will get a bottle of wine, and after the performance to-night we will have a little supper here. And I will forgive you for buying Toto."

"That will be best of all," cried Fifi, remembering that in the end she meant to marry Cartouche.

Cartouche went out, leaving Fifi alone, for half an hour of rapture with Toto, before it was time to go to the theater. He climbed up to his garret under the roof, and taking his cherished snuff-box from his breast where he always carried it, looked at it as a mother looks her last on her dead child; and then, going quickly downstairs again into the

street, he made for a pawnshop close by, with which he was well acquainted.

Just as he turned the corner of the street of the Black Cat, he almost ran into Duvernet's arms.

"Hey, Cartouche, you are the very man I want to see," cried the manager, buttonholing him. And then, noting that several persons on the street stopped and looked at him, Duvernet swelled out his chest and assumed an attitude in which he very much admired himself in his favorite part of the Roman senator.

Duvernet continued in a very impressive manner: "I contemplate both raising your salary, Cartouche, and also making you a little gift. You have worked hard for me; you got the Emperor to the theater, and business has been remarkably good ever since, and you have kept Julie Campionet from marrying me—so far, that is—and I feel the obligation, I assure you. So your salary after this will be twenty-five francs the week, and here are three ten-franc pieces which I beg you will accept."

With the air of a Roman emperor bestowing a province upon a faithful proconsul, Duvernet thrust the thirty francs into Cartouche's hand.

Cartouche, thoroughly dazed, mumbled something meant for thanks as he accepted the three ten-franc pieces. Duvernet, suddenly dropping his majestic manner, said, in Cartouche's ear:

"And remember, you have got to keep Julie Campionet from marrying me. I don't like the look in her eye—she shows she is bent on it—and stop Fifi from reminding me of that infernal white petticoat she gave me."

Cartouche nodded, and Duvernet, resuming his air of benignant magnificence, stalked off, happy. At least six persons had seen him make this princely present. His heart was good, although his head was indifferent, and he was sincerely glad to be able to reward Cartouche for his faithfulness.

In a minute or two Cartouche came to himself, and tore along the street, as fast as his stiff leg would allow, to the cloak shop, where, in two seconds, he had paid the money for the beautiful cloak, and had it wrapped in a bundle under his arm. How happy was Cartouche then!

He still had his ten francs, and he determined to make a little Christmas feast for Fifi. So he bought a jar of cabbage-soup, and a little bag of

onions, and some chocolate. Then he went into a wine shop for a bottle of wine.

The wine shop was a cheerful, dirty, agreeable place that he knew well. When he entered he found the shop full of men, standing around a table on which was a blindfolded boy with a hat full of slips of paper in his hand.

A shout greeted Cartouche's arrival.

"You are just in time, Monsieur Cartouche," cried the proprietor, a jolly red-faced man. "You make the last and twenty-fifth man necessary to join our lottery. I have bought a ticket in the Grand Imperial Lottery, which is to be drawn in a fortnight, and for every bottle of wine I sell, and a franc extra, I give my customers a chance in the lottery ticket, limiting it to twenty-five chances. Come now—I see good luck written all over you—hand me your franc."

Cartouche handed out his franc, bought his bottle of wine, and joined the circle at the table. The little boy handed the hat around, and every man took a slip out and read thereon a number. Cartouche took his slip and read out:

"Number 1313!"

A roar of laughter greeted this, but when it subsided, the proprietor advanced, and handing Cartouche a blue lottery ticket, said gravely:

"You have won, Monsieur Cartouche, in our lottery, and I hope you will win in the Imperial Lottery. The number of the ticket I offer you is 1313."

There was another shout of derision, and several of the disappointed ones commiserated with Cartouche on the load of ill luck he was carrying off with him in number 1313, but Cartouche stoutly maintained that there was nothing to be afraid of, and hurried back to the street of the Black Cat.

There was just time for him to get to the theater and dress. The people came pouring into the house, and the box office took in the enormous sum of two hundred and ninety-eight francs. It was again Duvernet's Roman tragedy, and it went finely. Fifi again acted as if inspired, and received any number of recalls, besides a wreath of holly, with an imitation silver buckle in it, handed over the footlights from an unknown admirer.

During the waits between the acts she told her fellow actors of Toto's charms and accomplishments, so that the other women, some of whom pos-

sessed nothing more interesting than babies, were furiously jealous.

But at last the play was over, and Fifi and Cartouche were in Fifi's garret, with a good fire in the stove, made with Cartouche's fagots, the cabbage-soup, the onions, the wine, and the sausage, and the chocolate on the table, and Toto to make the trio complete. Cartouche had sneaked the cloak in, without Fifi's seeing it, and just as they were sitting down to the table he said carelessly, as if thirty-franc cloaks were the most ordinary incidents in life:

"Fifi, if you will open that bundle on the chair, you will find a little gift from me."

Fifi ran and tore the parcel open, and there was the beautiful, warm, crimson cloak. She flew to Cartouche, and with dewy eyes, although her lips were smiling, gave him one of those hearty kisses she had given him when she was a little, black-eyed damsel ten years old. Cartouche did not return the kiss, but sat, first pale and then red, and with such a strange look on his face that Fifi was puzzled.

"Never mind," she said to herself. "The next

time it will be he who kisses me—not I who kiss him."

But nothing could spoil the joy over the new cloak.

"To think that I should have the red cloak and Toto, too! Oh, it is too much!" cried Fifi.

"Quite too much—too much by way of a dog," remarked Cartouche; but as Toto at that moment jumped from his chair at the table on to Cartouche's knee, it became impossible not to be friendly with the little rogue, and perfect harmony reigned among the three friends.

Cartouche and Fifi were among the poorest people in Paris; they worked hard for a very little money; the room was small and bare, and although Fifi had now a cloak for the winter, she would have been better off for some warm stockings, and Cartouche for some flannel shirts.

Nevertheless, they were as happy as the birds in spring. They ate, they drank, they laughed, they sang. Fifi dressed Toto up in his ballet costume, and together they did a beautiful *ballet divertissement* for Cartouche, which he liberally applauded. He told Fifi of his twenty-five francs a week, as well as Duvernet's present, and Fifi concluded that

he would be a desirable *parti* for his money as well as for his solid virtues, and determined to propose to him before another year should pass.

Cartouche had forgotten about the lottery ticket, but just as he was leaving, he remembered it and handed it to Fifi. At the sight of the numbers on it, Fifi shrieked:

"Take it away! Take it away! It will bring bad luck! Take it away!"

"I won't," replied Cartouche, "and do you, Fifi, take care of it. You may draw the hundred-thousand-franc prize in the lottery yet. Just as likely as not the prizes are put on the numbers that nobody would choose."

This somewhat reconciled Fifi to the danger of keeping number 1313; so she reluctantly put it away in the box where she kept her treasure of a paste brooch, remarking meanwhile:

"If it draws the hundred-thousand-franc prize, I will marry you, Cartouche."

Again Cartouche turned red and pale. These jokes which seemed to amuse Fifi so much, cut him to the quick. He only growled:

"About as much chance of one as of the other."

And then a great melodious deep-toned bell in

a neighboring church began its chiming, solemn and glorious, proclaiming that Christmas Day was at hand, and Fifi, falling on her knees, as her mother had taught her long years ago, in Italy, thanked God for giving her Cartouche, and Toto, and the red cloak lined with flannel.

She forgot all about the lottery ticket.

CHAPTER III

THE GRAND PRIZE

For the first fortnight of the new year, things went swimmingly at the Imperial Theater, and several times the nightly receipts were over three hundred francs. Duvernet wrote and produced a new play, in which he took the part of Alexander the Great; and it was a screaming success. Fifi as Queen Roxana was simply stunning, wearing her alleged diamond brooch in a tiara made by her own hands, of beautiful glass beads. The merry war between Julie Campionet and herself went on as noisily as ever, but there was more noise than malignity about it. When Julie was ill with a cold, Fifi went and cooked Julie's dinner for her; and when Fifi needed a scepter for her part of Queen Roxana, Julie Campionet sent her a very nice parasol handle with a glass knob at the top which made a lovely scepter.

But they did not, for these trifles, deny themselves the pleasure of quarreling, and Duvernet was

treated about once a week to a threat from each of them that if her rival were not immediately discharged, the complainant would at once resign. Duvernet received these threats with secret satisfaction, because, as he explained to Cartouche, as long as the war was actively prosecuted, Julie Campionet did not have time to make a serious demonstration against him.

"But if ever they are reconciled," he confided gloomily to Cartouche, "the Campionet woman will marry me in a week."

As for Cartouche, he attended strictly to his business at the theater, but his mind was so much taken up with certain possibilities of the future that he did not keep the faithful watch over Duvernet which the manager considered as his safeguard. Cartouche was even so inconsiderate as to let Julie Campionet get into the manager's private office more than once, and remain there alone with him for at least five minutes, without interrupting the tête-à-tête.

It was the lottery ticket which in some way grievously disturbed Cartouche's mind. Suppose Fifi should win a prize? And from that supposing, came a kind of superstitious conviction that num-

ber 1313 *would* win a prize. He found himself, without his own volition, figuring upon what should be done with the money, so as to enure to the greatest benefit of Fifi.

"If it is a twenty-franc prize she draws, she must have a pair of new shoes, and some good stockings"—he thought, for Cartouche knew intimately the condition of Fifi's wardrobe. "If it is as much as fifty francs, the shoes and stockings must wait—it won't do to fool away such a sum as fifty francs; it must be put aside for a rainy day, for Fifi, in the tin box in the cranny of the chimney"—where Cartouche was beginning to save up also for a rainy day, for Fifi. If it were five hundred francs—or possibly a thousand—Cartouche lost his breath in contemplation of the catastrophe. In that case, Fifi would have a *dot*, but whom would she marry? She knew no one but the men about the theater, and Cartouche did not consider any of them a match for Fifi; but perhaps he was prejudiced. She might, it is true, with five hundred francs to her dowry, marry a tradesman; but how would Fifi get on with a tradesman?

Altogether, it was the most puzzling proposition Cartouche had ever struggled with, and he began

to wish the fateful day were over, and that these strange dreams and hopes and fears about Fifi and the lottery ticket would vanish like shapes in a mist, and leave him in peace.

Then, there was that veiled suggestion from the Emperor that he knew something about Fifi's family which might change her whole destiny; and on the whole, Cartouche had good reason to go about looking like a sick bull, which was his way of showing a passionate solicitude for the being dearest to him on earth. And meanwhile, Julie Campionet went hot foot after the manager, and Fifi wondered why Cartouche was so gentle with her and so indulgent with Toto.

The lottery drawing was to be held on the tenth of January, in a large public hall of the *arrondissement*, the mayor presiding. The drawing was to begin at noon, and last until all the tickets were drawn. As the day drew near, Cartouche's fever of excitement increased, and when the morning of the tenth dawned he was as nervous as a cat. He knocked at Fifi's door early, and told her to be ready to go with him at twelve o'clock to the lottery drawing. Fifi responded sleepily, but when the hour came she was ready to accompany him.

It was a lovely, bright morning, and Fifi's looks were in harmony with the morning. The red cloak was very becoming to her, and the black feathers, for which her first thirty francs had gone, nodded over the most sparkling, piquant face in Paris. Toto, of course, was along, led by a long blue ribbon in his mistress' hand; and so they set off.

Fifi had not the slightest thought of drawing a prize.

"As if 1313 would draw anything!" she sniffed. "If you had given me that franc, Cartouche, which the ticket cost, I could have bought a pair of gloves, or a fan, or a bushel of onions—" Fifi went on to enumerate what she could have bought with Cartouche's franc, until its purchasing power grew to be something like her whole weekly salary. But in any event, she liked the expedition she was on and Toto liked it; so, on the whole, Fifi concluded she could at least get fifty centimes' worth of pleasure out of the lottery ticket.

She looked so pretty as she tripped along that Cartouche mentally resolved, if she drew a five-hundred-franc prize, she might aspire to a notary, such as her father had been; and engrossed with

the thought of Fifi's possible rise in the world, he was so grumpy, Fifi declared she almost hated him.

They were among the first to arrive, and secured good seats near the tribune. There sat the officers of the lottery, the mayor with his tricolored sash, and several representatives of the government, together with a little fairy of a child, all in white, who was to draw the numbers from the wheel, which was already in place.

The crowd assembled in the hall was an orderly and well-dressed one, but Fifi and Cartouche, who were used to crowds, felt in a subtile way that it was quite different from the ordinary crowd. Most of the people were, like Cartouche, in a state of acute tension. They were strangely still and silent, but also, strangely ready to laugh, to cry, to shout—to do anything which would take the edge off the crisis.

When the drawing began, and one or two small prizes of twenty and fifty francs were drawn, the winners were vociferously cheered. There was a feeling that the grand prize of a hundred thousand francs would not be drawn until late in the after-

noon, and the people were letting off their excitement over the little prizes, waiting for the thunderbolt to fall. But scarcely half an hour after the drawing began, there was a sudden, deep pause—time itself seemed to stop for a moment—and then the auctioneer, who was calling out the prizes, roared out:

"Number 1313 draws the grand prize of one hundred thousand francs!"

Cartouche sat stunned. Like persons near drowning, he saw in an instant, by some inward vision, all his past and future with Fifi; she was no more for him. A great gulf had opened between them. Had it been thundered in his ears for a century, he could not have realized it more than in the first two seconds after the announcement was made. Fifi had a hundred thousand francs; then she could be Fifi, his little Fifi, no more. He saw, in a mental flash, the little store he had saved up in the cranny of the chimney—twenty-two francs. Twenty-two francs! What a miserable sum! A blur came before his eyes; he heard a great noise of men shouting and clapping; women were waving their handkerchiefs and laughing and screaming

out of sheer inability to keep quiet. As for Fifi, she turned two wide, innocent, frightened eyes on Cartouche, and stammered:

"Dear Cartouche—shall we really have a hundred—thousand—francs—of our own?"

"You will have it, Fifi," replied Cartouche, and thrusting the ticket in her nerveless hand, he forced her to stand up and show it, which Fifi did, then suddenly burst into a torrent of tears and a tempest of sobs.

Her youth, her beauty, her tears, her humility touched all hearts; and this time there was a roar of sympathy. Fifi's slight figure swayed and would have fallen but for Cartouche holding her up. It was buzzed about on all sides:

"Who is that tall, ugly fellow with her?" Some said her father, some her brother, but no one said he was her lover.

The formalities were simple and brief; the drawing would still take many hours; and Fifi, with her precious memorandum, duly signed and countersigned, to be presented at a certain bank, was once again in the street with Cartouche.

It was a bright, soft January day, the sun gilding the blue river, the quays and bridges, and lighting

up with a golden glow the great masses of the Louvre and the Tuileries. Fifi walked along, clutching Cartouche's arm tightly. She had forgotten Toto trotting soberly at her side, and apparently crushed by the hundred thousand francs, forgotten all but Cartouche, who seemed to her the only thing that was not changed in all the wide world. It was Cartouche who held Toto's blue ribbon and who straightened Fifi's hat when it fell over her eyes and she was too agitated to know it. Cartouche proposed to her to stop and rest in the Tuileries gardens—but Fifi would have none of it.

"Take me home," she cried. "Take me somewhere so I can cry as much as I like!"

This struck Cartouche as a perfectly natural way of receiving such stunning news; he himself could have wept with pleasure.

At last they were in Fifi's shabby little room, and Fifi was taking off her new cloak and folding it up mechanically.

"No need to do that, Fifi," said Cartouche, in a strange voice. "After to-morrow you need not wear thirty-franc cloaks any more."

"Oh, you cruel Cartouche!" cried Fifi, and burst into the anticipated fit of crying. She insisted on

weeping on Cartouche's shoulder, and even kicked Toto when that sympathetic dog would have joined his grief to hers, for Toto knew well enough that something was to pay, whether it was the devil or not, he could not tell, but rather suspected it was the devil.

Cartouche tried to comfort Fifi—usually not a difficult problem when one has to be reconciled to a fortune—but there is always something staggering in contemplating another state of existence. Neither Cartouche nor Fifi could at once become calm, and Fifi, too, felt in some singular, but acute manner, that the hundred thousand francs stood between her and Cartouche.

"Now, mind, Fifi," Cartouche said, "not a word of this to the people in the theater. Wait until the money is actually in your hands."

"In my hands," cried Fifi, tearfully and indignantly, "in *your* hands, you mean, you cruel Cartouche!"

Fifi had called Cartouche cruel a dozen times since she had drawn the prize, but Cartouche did not mind it. He would have liked to stay with her but there were a dozen things awaiting him at the theater, and Cartouche was not the man to neglect

his work. He went off, therefore, and had not a minute to himself, until just before it was time to dress for the play. Then he went to his room, and taking his tin box from the chink in the chimney, he counted over his twenty-two francs—saved by doing without food and fire.

Clothes and shoes he must have to keep his place in the theater. Duvernet had been a good friend to him, and he could not go in rags, so that people would say: "There goes one of Duvernet's actors. That man does not pay his people enough to give them decent clothes to their backs."

But food and fire were a man's own affairs, and, by keeping on the near side of both, Cartouche had been able to save twenty-two francs in three weeks of the coldest weather he had ever felt. And how little it was! How contemptible alongside of a hundred thousand francs! Cartouche, sighing, put the box back. It was all in vain: those days when he battled with his hunger, those bitter nights when the snow lay deep on the roofs below his garret, and his old, cracked stove was as cold as the snow. And yet, there had been a tender, piercing sweetness in the very endurance of those privations—it was for Fifi. And Fifi would never more need his savings,

which thought should have made him happy, but did not.

The next day, the whole story was out, the newspapers published the numbers and names of the winners, and it was as if Fifi had been transported to another planet.

Duvernet came first to congratulate her. She was in a cold spasm of terror for fear he had come to tell her that her services were no longer needed at the theater. It seemed to her as if she were about to be thrown headlong into an unknown abyss, and she thought that if she could but remain at the Imperial Theater for a short while longer, long enough to get accustomed to that stupendous change which awaited her, it would become a little more tolerable. And Duvernet himself was so strange, it frightened Fifi. He was so respectful; he did not strut as usual, and he called her Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, instead of Fifi. And Toto, who usually barked furiously at the manager, did not bark at all, but sat on his hind legs, his fore legs dropping dejectedly, and looked ruefully in Duvernet's face, as much as to say:

"See, Monsieur Duvernet; we have got a hundred thousand francs and we don't know what to

do with it, or how to behave ourselves." Toto, in fact, had neither barked nor danced nor jumped since he heard the news, and appeared thoroughly oppressed and abashed by his changed fortunes.

Duvernet, it is true, felt some awe of Fifi in her new aspect, but the active and enterprising manager was still uppermost with him.

"Well, Mademoiselle," he began, trying to assume an airy manner, "I presume we shall have to dispense with your valuable services at the Imperial Theater; you will probably abandon the stage altogether, and certainly our humble place."

Duvernet, before this, had always spoken as if the Imperial Theater were the rival of the Théâtre Française.

Fifi burst into tears.

"Yes," she cried, "I shall have to go away—and that odious Julie Campionet, who can no more act than a gridiron can act, will have all my best parts —o-o-o-o-oo-h!"

Then Duvernet played his trump card.

"A few farewell performances, Mademoiselle, would put Julie Campionet's nose severely out of joint."

"Do you think so?" cried Fifi, brightening up

at the thought of putting Julie's Roman nose out of joint; that, at least, seemed natural and normal.

"If Cartouche will let me—" for Fifi now, instead of opposing Cartouche, seemed unable to come to the smallest decision without him.

"I will see to that," replied the manager eagerly, "and I will also see to it that Julie Campionet is made to gnaw the file."

Just then Cartouche coming in, Fifi besought him to let her act for at least two weeks more; and Cartouche, feeling himself that vague, but intense strangeness of all things and people since Fifi got her hundred thousand francs, consented. When it was decided, Toto laid his nose down on his paws and uttered a short whine of relief, which sounded like grace after meat.

So Fifi was to play for two weeks more at the Imperial Theater, the franc seats were to be two francs, and the cheapest seats, fifty centimes. Fifi breathed again. It was a respite.

Meanwhile Fifi had been formally notified that the money was awaiting her at a certain bank, and she was requested to name a day for the payment to her, in the presence of an official of the lottery, a friend of her own, and a representative of the

lottery company. Fifi, or rather Cartouche for her, named a day a whole month from the day of the lottery drawing. They were both frightened at the prospect of Fifi's receiving the money.

She and Cartouche resumed their life exactly as it had been before number 1313 was purchased. Cartouche, going about attending to his business as usual, thought his head would crack. At the end of the month, what was to be done? He was but little more experienced than Fifi when it came to a hundred thousand francs. Fifi must find another and a very different home—but where? She must be married—but when and how and to whom? He knew of no one of whom he could ask advice, except one, and he was not easy to reach—the Emperor. Cartouche was as certain as he was of being alive, that if he could see his Emperor, and could tell the whole story, a way out of all his perplexities could be found. He had a shadowy hope that the Emperor might have discovered something about Fifi, according to that mysterious hint he gave the memorable night when he heard her name, but it did not materialize.

At last Cartouche formed the desperate resolve of trying to see the Emperor and telling all his

trouble about Fifi. On certain mornings in the week an inspection of the Imperial Guard was held in the courtyard of the Tuileries; and on one of these mornings—a cold, dull, uncertain morning, matching Cartouche's feelings—he went and stationed himself as close to the iron railings of the courtyard as the police would let him. He thought to himself: "The Emperor sees everything and everybody. He will see me, and he will know that I have something on my mind, and then he will send for me, and I will make a clean breast of it; and the Emperor will tell me what to do with Fifi and her money."

The guard was drawn up into a hollow square, their splendid uniforms making a splash of color in the dull gray day, their arms shining, their bronzed countenances and steady eyes fit to face the great god Mars himself. Presently an electric thrill flashed through every soldier and each of the crowd of onlookers, as when a demigod appears among the lesser sons of men—the Emperor appeared, stepping quickly across the courtyard.

He was in simple dress uniform, and had with him only two or three anxious-looking officers; for he was then the eagle-eyed general, who knew

if a button was missing or a strap awry, and incidentally read the soul of the man before him. At once, he ordered this man and that to open his knapsack; one piercing glance sufficed to see in it and through it. He had a musket examined here and there, and in a flash he knew if everything was as it should be. The inspection was rapid, but nothing escaped the magic eyes of the Emperor. All was in order, and in consequence, Jove smiled.

Cartouche saw that the Emperor would pass within a few yards of him, and he stood, erect and rigid, at "attention," waiting for the lightning glance to find him, and, just as he expected, the Emperor's eye swept over the waiting crowd, rested a moment on him, recognized him instantly, and as Cartouche made a slight gesture of entreaty, nodded to him. Five minutes after, a smart young aide stepped up, and motioning to Cartouche, walked toward the palace; Cartouche followed.

He did not know how he got into a small room on the ground floor, which communicated with the Emperor's cabinet. He was hot and cold and red and pale, but said to himself: "Never mind, as soon as I see the Emperor I shall feel as cool and

easy as possible. For when was it that a private soldier was not at his ease with the Emperor? It is the bigwigs who think they know something, whom the Emperor frightens."

There was a long wait, but after a while the door opened, and the same young aide ushered him into the Emperor's cabinet; and just as Cartouche had known, he felt as easy as ever in his life as soon as he found himself alone with the Emperor.

The Emperor sat at a table, leaning his elbow upon it. His pale and classic face was luminous with a smile as he saw Cartouche; he had no more forgotten the first man across the bridge at Lodi than Cartouche had forgotten him.

"Well, my friend," he said, smiling. "I was about to send for you, because I have found out some surprising things about your protegée, Mademoiselle Fifi; and besides, I see by the newspapers that she has drawn a prize of a hundred thousand francs in the lottery."

"Yes, Sire," replied Cartouche, "and I want to ask your Majesty what I am to do with Fifi's hundred thousand francs."

"Good God!" cried the Emperor, getting up and walking about the room with his hands behind his

back, "I know no more what to do with a hundred thousand francs than you do; I never had a hundred thousand francs of my own in my life. I have a civil list of forty millions, which I disburse for the benefit of the state, but it is as much as I can do to keep myself and my wife in clothes. Women are expensive creatures, Cartouche."

"True, your Majesty," replied Cartouche, "and Fifi does not know what to do with money when she gets it—" Then, in a burst of confidence he told the Emperor about the thirty francs Fifi had saved up for a cloak and invested in a little black dog instead. The Emperor threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"This Fifi must be a character. Well, I shall ask Lebrun, the arch-treasurer, to give us his advice about Fifi's hundred thousand francs. But suppose she will not trust you and me and the arch-treasurer with her money?"

"I don't know about the arch-treasurer, your Majesty, but I am sure Fifi will trust you, Sire, and me. But what is to be done with Fifi herself, is puzzling me."

"That can be easily settled, I think. You remember I told you, when I found her name was

Chiaramonti, that I might have some surprising news about her. I was, this very morning, contemplating sending for you. Well, this young lady, whom you found crying in the market-place at Mantua, I have discovered is the granddaughter of Barnabas Gregory Chiaramonti, who was the first cousin and playmate, in his boyhood, of Gregory Barnabas Chiaramonti, now reigning over the Holy See as Pius the Seventh, and at present, sojourning as my guest at the palace of Fontainebleau."

Everything reeled before Cartouche, and he had to hold on to the back of a chair to keep from falling.

Some minutes passed. The world was changing its aspect so rapidly to Cartouche that he hardly recognized it as the same old planet he had known for thirty-five years.

The Emperor waited until Cartouche had a little recovered himself, although he was still pale and breathed hard. Then the Emperor said:

"I shall cause the Holy Father to be informed of Fifi's existence. He is a good old man, although as obstinate as the devil. Oh, I am sure we can ar-

range for Fifi; and then, Cartouche, how about a husband for her?"

The Emperor, as he said this, looked steadily at Cartouche; but Cartouche, looking back as steadily, replied:

"I should think the Holy Father would arrange that, your Majesty."

"True," replied the Emperor, "but I wish one of my deserving young officers might suit the Holy Father as Fifi's husband. I say, Cartouche, how hard life is sometimes! Now, because Fifi is rich through the lottery ticket you bought her, you can never hope to marry her."

"Oh, your Majesty, that could not have been in any event," answered Cartouche, a dull red showing through his dark skin. "I am sixteen years older than Fifi, and I have a stiff leg, and although I make what is reckoned a good living for a man like me, it is not the sort of living for a notary's daughter like Fifi. No, your Majesty; I love Fifi, but I never thought to make her my wife. She deserves a better man than I am."

"Another sort of a man, Cartouche, but not a better one," replied the Emperor, gently tweaking

Cartouche's ear. "I shall arrange for the Holy Father to be told of Fifi's existence, and we shall see about the hundred thousand francs; and, Cartouche, if you are in any trouble or perplexity, come to your Emperor."

And with that, Cartouche knew the interview was over, and he went away with a heart both light and heavy. For Cartouche was a very human man after all, and the thought of Fifi's having a husband made the whole world black to him.

CHAPTER IV

COURTSHIP AND CRIBBAGE

Behold Fifi, a fortnight afterward, installed in a quiet and correct apartment in the Rue de l'Echelle, under the charge of a certain Madame Bourcet, who was as quiet and correct as her apartment. And Madame Bourcet had a nephew, Louis Bourcet, more quiet and more correct even than herself, and he aspired to marry Fifi and her hundred thousand francs.

It was all like a dream to Fifi. The Emperor had been as good as his word. He had consulted Lebrun, the arch-treasurer, who had advised, as Fifi was likely to be provided soon with a husband, that the hundred thousand francs be again deposited in the bank, as soon as it was drawn, less a small amount for Fifi's present expenses. He argued, that it would simplify matters in her marriage contract to have her *dot* in cash—which recommended itself to all who knew, as sound doctrine.

He had also been asked by the Emperor, if he

knew of a respectable person who would take charge of Fifi for the present. It would still be some time before the day came which she and Cartouche had named for the actual payment of the money. And besides it was necessary to prepare for Fifi's presentation to the Holy Father, and everybody, including Fifi herself, agreed that certain preliminaries of dress and custom be arranged for that momentous interview. Lebrun had bethought him of Madame Bourcet, whose deceased husband had been a hanger-on of the arch-treasurer's. Thus it was that the day after Fifi finished her engagement at the Imperial Theater, Cartouche had deposited her and her boxes in the quiet apartment of the quiet Madame Bourcet.

There was one box which she particularly treasured and would not let out of her sight from the time it was put into the van until it was placed in the large, cold, handsome room which was set aside for her in Madame Bourcet's apartment. No one but Fifi knew what was in this box. It contained her whole theatrical wardrobe, consisting of three costumes, and her entire assortment of wigs, old shoes, cosmetics and such impedimenta. Fifi would not have parted with these for half her fortune.

They would be something real, substantial and familiar in her new environment. They gave her a mystic hold upon the street of the Black Cat, upon the Imperial Theater, and upon Cartouche, so Fifi felt.

Toto was brought along with the boxes, but met with such a cool reception from Madame Bourcet that he declined to remain; nor would Madame Bourcet admit a dog of his theatrical antecedents in her family. Nothing had been said about a dog; she disliked dogs, because they barked; there was no place for him in the apartment. Toto showed his understanding of Madame Bourcet's attitude toward him by deliberately turning his back on her, and walking out of the house after Cartouche. Fifi said not a word. She was too dazed to make any protest. Cartouche's honest heart was wrung when he left her sitting silent and alone in Madame Bourcet's drawing-room.

It was á large, dull room with a snuff-colored carpet on the floor, snuff-colored furniture and snuff-colored curtains to the windows, which overlooked a great, quiet courtyard. No wonder that Fifi, as soon as Cartouche left her, rushed into her own room, which adjoined the drawing-room, and open-

ing her treasured box, took out an old white wig, and clasping it to her bosom, rocked to and fro in an agony. There was but one thing in the box that was not hers, and that was a wooden javelin which Cartouche had used with great effect in his part of the centurion of the Pretorian Guard. It was rather a commonplace looking javelin in the cold light of day, but Fifi held that, too, to her breast; it was those things that kept her from losing her mind; they made her feel that after all, the old life existed, and was not a nightmare, like the present.

With the moral support of the wig and the javelin she was enabled to compose herself, and to meet Madame Bourcet and Louis Bourcet, the nephew, and as Fifi shrewdly suspected, the person assigned to become the future owner of her hundred thousand francs. But Fifi had some ideas of her own concerning her marriage, which, although lying dormant for a time, were far from moribund.

For this first evening in her snuff-colored house, Fifi, with a heavy heart, put on her best gown; it was very red and very skimpy, but Fifi had been

told she looked charming in it, which was the truth; but it didn't seem to charm Madame Bourcet, when Fifi finally presented herself.

Madame Bourcet was a small, obstinate, kindly, narrow-minded woman, who went about measuring the universe with her own tape line. Louis Bourcet proved to be Madame Bourcet in trousers. Fifi thought, if Louis were dressed up in his aunt's petticoats and Madame Bourcet were to put on Louis' trousers, nobody could tell them apart.

Before this interesting youth was presented to Fifi, Madame Bourcet informed her that Louis was the most correct young advocate in Paris and had not a fault. After this promising introduction, Fifi hated Louis at first sight; but with that overwhelming sense of strangeness and of being led blindly toward an unknown fate, Fifi gave no sign of dislike toward the most correct young advocate in Paris, and the man without a fault.

As for Louis Bourcet, he thought that a discerning Providence had dropped Fifi, with her hundred thousand francs, into his mouth, as it were. He knew that she had been an actress in a poor little theater; but she was a Chiaramonti, her grand-

father was own cousin to the Holy Father, and the hundred thousand francs covered a multitude of sins.

And it was another of the rewards of a judicious Providence that Fifi's money had come to her as it had—dropping from the sky into her lap. There was no prying father, no meddling trustee to interfere with her prospective husband's future control of it. Louis Bourcet was honest, if conceited, and meant to do a good part by Fifi. He contemplated making her exactly like his aunt, in every respect; and as Fifi was only nineteen, Louis had not the slightest doubt that with his authority as a husband, together with his personal charms, he would be able to mold Fifi to his will, and make her rapturously happy in the act of doing it.

As soon as Fifi was established in Madame Bourcet's apartment, Louis began to lay siege to her. Regularly every evening at eight o'clock, he arrived—to pay his respects to his aunt. Regularly did he propose to play a game of cribbage with Fifi: a dull and uninteresting game, which involved counting—and counting had always been a weak point with Fifi—she always counted her salary at too much, and her expenses at too little.

Her counting at cribbage determined Louis to keep the family purse himself, after they were married—for Louis looked forward securely to this event. Regularly at nine o'clock Madame Bourcet fell asleep, or professed to fall asleep, peacefully in her armchair. Regularly, Louis improved the opportunity by telling Fifi how much his income was, going into the minutest detail. That, however, took only a short time; but much more was consumed in telling how he spent it. A very little wine; no cards or billiards; a solemn visit four times the year to the Théâtre Française to see a classic play, and a fortnight in summer in the country. Such was the life which Louis subtly proposed that Fifi should lead with him.

Fifi listened, dazed and silent. The room was so quiet, so quiet, and at that hour all was life, bustle, gaiety and movement at the Imperial Theater. She knew to the very moment what Cartouche was doing, and what Toto was doing; and there was that hateful minx, Julie Campionet, being rapturously applauded in parts which were as much Fifi's as the clothes upon Fifi's back—for Julie Campionet had promptly succeeded to Fifi's vacant place, in spite of Cartouche. All this dis-

tracted Fifi's attention from the nightly game of cribbage and made her count worse than ever.

And so Fifi began to live, for the first time, without love and without work. Only the other day, she remembered, she had been hungry and hard-worked and happy; and now she was neither hungry nor hard-worked, but assuredly, she was not happy.

She had not seen Cartouche since the day he left her and her boxes in the Rue de l'Echelle, and had walked off with Toto, and, incidentally, with all of Fifi's happiness. She had directed him to come to see her often, and he had not once been near her! At this thought Fifi clenched her little fists with rage: Cartouche was her own—her very own—and how dared he treat her in this manner?

In the beginning, every day Fifi expected him, and would run to the window twenty times in an afternoon. But he neither came nor wrote. After a while, Fifi's heart became sore and she burst out before Madame Bourcet and Louis:

"Cartouche has not come to see me; he has not even written."

"But, my dear child," remonstrated Madame

Bourcet, "you surely do not expect to keep up a correspondence with a—a—person like this Monsieur—what—do—you—call—him—"

"Cartouche!" cried Fifi, opening her eyes very wide indeed. "Why, Cartouche has done everything for me! He taught me all I know about acting, and he always carried my fagots upstairs, and showed me how to clean my white shoes when they became soiled, and—"

Fifi stopped. She could have told a great deal more; not only that Cartouche showed her how to clean her white shoes, but that he actually took the shoes off her poor little feet when she was so, so tired; and Cartouche must have been tired, too, having been on his legs—or rather his leg and a half—all the day and evening. These, and other reminiscences of Cartouche, in the capacity of lady's maid, cook, and what not, occurred to her quick memory, almost overwhelming her. It seemed to her as if he had done all for her that her mother had once done, but she could not speak of it before Madame Bourcet, still less Louis Bourcet. Imagine the most correct young advocate in Paris taking Fifi's shoes off, because she was tired! Louis would have let her die of fatigue before he

would have committed this horrid crime, as he conceived it.

So Fifi checked the ebullition that was rising in her, and kept her head and held her tongue. But when she was once alone in her own large, solemn room, fitter for a dowager duchess than for little Fifi, she poured out her soul in a letter to Cartouche—thus:

"Cartouche—Why haven't you been to see me? Cartouche, I believe you have forgotten me—that odious Julie Campionet has played me some trick, I know she has. Cartouche, having money is not all we thought it was. It is very dull being rich and certain of one's dinner every day. Madame Bourcet and I went out yesterday and bought a gown. Cartouche, do you remember when I had saved up the thirty francs to buy a cloak, and bought Toto, my darling Toto, instead? And how angry you were with me? And then you gave me the cloak out of your own money? Don't send Toto to see me—it would break my heart. The gown I bought yesterday is hideous. It is a dark brown with green spots. Madame Bourcet selected it. There was a beautiful pink thing, with

a great many spangles, that I wanted. It is just like the stuff that Toto's ballet skirt is made of. But the gown is for me to wear the day I am presented to the Holy Father, and Madame Bourcet said the pink spangled thing would not do. Then she bought me some black lace to wear over my head that day, and she paid a cruel price for it, but the shops where you get new things are very dear. Madame Bourcet will not let me go to the second-hand shops. Do you remember the blue silk robe that Monsieur Duvernet made me buy a year ago for forty francs, and how it turned out to have a big grease-spot in the back, and I was so afraid the spot would be seen, that it almost ruined my performance as *Léontine* in *'Papa Bouchard'?* And how do you get your costumes to hang together when I am not there to sew them? I know you are coming all to pieces by this time. Have you forgotten how I used to sew you up? Oh, Cartouche, have you forgotten all these things? I think of them all the time. I wake up in the night, thinking I hear Toto barking, and it is only Madame Bourcet snoring. Cartouche, if you don't come to see me soon you will break my heart.

FIFI."

Cartouche read this letter sitting on the edge of his poor bed. His eyes grew moist, and the foolish fellow actually kissed Fifi's name; but he said to himself resolutely:

"No, I will not go to her. It will only make the struggle harder. She must separate herself from the old life, and the quicker, the better. The pain is sharp, but it will not last—for her."

And he was such a fool that he read the letter aloud to Toto, who was huddled close to him; and then the two who loved Fifi so dearly—the man and the dog—rubbed noses, and mourned together, Toto uttering a howl of distress and longing that cut Cartouche to the heart.

"Come," said he, putting the dog aside, and rising, "I can't go on this way. One would think I was sorry that Fifi is better off than she ever hoped or dreamed."

Then he went to his cupboard, and took out a little frayed white satin slipper—one of Fifi's slippers—and held it tenderly in his hand, while his poor heart was breaking. Next day, came a letter of another sort from Fifi. She was very, very angry, and wrote in a large hand, and with very black ink.

"Cartouche: I will not stand your conduct. I give you warning; I will not permit it. *You* are responsible for my being here. But for you and that—" here a word was erased, but Cartouche saw the faint outlines of "devilish"—"lottery ticket, I should have still been in my little room under the roof—I should still have you and Toto. Oh, Cartouche, I shall have to marry Louis Bourcet—I see it, I know it, I feel it. He has not a fault in the world, so Madame Bourcet says. Imagine what a brute I shall appear alongside of him! He plays cribbage. That is his only dissipation. But I see that I must marry him, for this life I am leading can not last. Madame Bourcet tells me she has four or five diseases, any one of which is liable to carry her off any day; and then I should be left alone in Paris with a hundred thousand francs. Something—everything seems to be driving me toward marrying Louis Bourcet. Poor Louis! How sorry he will be after he gets me! Next week, Madame Bourcet takes me out to Fontainebleau where I am to be presented to the Holy Father. The gown has come home, and it is more hideous than it was in the shop. If the Holy Father has any taste in dress that gown will ruin

my chances with him. Cartouche, I am not joking —I can never joke any more. But I will not put up with your behavior. Do you understand me? It is Fifi who says this. You know, you always told me when I flew into a rage I could frighten Monsieur Duvernet. You remember, he often ran into his closet and locked the door when I was storming at him at the theater. I am much more angry now. Fifi."

To this letter also Cartouche made no answer. He did not know the ways of ladies who had dowries of a hundred thousand francs. He had heard they were always supplied with husbands by some one duly empowered; and these decisions, he imagined, were like the laws of the Medes and Persians. He felt for his poor little Fifi; her vivid, incoherent words were perfectly intelligible to him and went like a knife into his heart. He mused over them in such poignant grief that he could hardly drag himself through his multitude of duties. He had no life or spirit to keep watch over Duvernet; and Julie Campionet, one fine morning, took advantage of this and, walking the manager off to the *mairie*, married him out of hand. The first

thing Cartouche knew of it was when the bridegroom, with a huge white favor in his buttonhole, marched into Cartouche's garret.

"She's done it, Cartouche," groaned Duvernet. "They all do."

Cartouche knew perfectly well what poor Duvernet meant.

"She has, has she?" he roared, "and did you tell her about the three other women you have married, and got yourself in such a precious mess with?"

"Yes," groaned Duvernet, seating himself on the side of the bed. "She knows all about it—but I couldn't explain which ones had sued me for divorce, and which I had sued. But Julie didn't mind. You see, she is thirty-six years old, and never has been married, and she made up her mind it wasn't worth while to wait longer; and when women get that way, it's no use opposing them."

"The last time," shouted Cartouche, quite beside himself at the manager's folly, for which he himself felt twinges of conscience, "the last time you said it was because she was a widow! Duvernet, as sure as you are alive, you will bring yourself behind the bars of Ste. Pélagie."

"If I do," cried poor Duvernet, stung by Car-

touche's reproaches, "whose fault will it be? If you had kept an eye on Julie Campionet, this never would have happened. It was you who bought that cursed lottery ticket for Fifi, and lost me the only leading lady I ever had who didn't insist on marrying me against my will."

Here was a cud for Cartouche to chew upon: young ladies reproaching him bitterly for giving them a hundred thousand francs in cash, and happy bridegrooms reviling him because through him they secured brides. Cartouche was too stunned by it all to answer. The only thing he could do was to try to keep Duvernet's unfortunate weakness from landing him in jail. Luckily, none of his wives had any use for Duvernet, after a very short probation, and as he had no property to speak of, and the earnings of the Imperial Theater were uncertain, there was no money to be squeezed out of him. So, unless the authorities should get wind of Duvernet's matrimonial ventures, which he persisted in regarding as mere escapades, into which he was led by a stronger will than his own, he would be allowed to roam at large.

"At all events," said Cartouche, after a while, "I can make Julie Campionet behave herself as

long as she is willing to stay here by threatening to lodge an information against both of you with the magistrate."

"Do," anxiously urged Duvernet. "I would not mind serving a short term in prison if Julie gets troublesome. Well, all men are fools where women are concerned."

"No, they are not," replied Cartouche darkly; "there are a few bachelors left."

"It is fate, destiny, what you will," said the mournful bridegroom. "That woman, Julie Campionet—or Duvernet she is now—meant to marry me from the start, just like the rest. Oh, if only little Fifi were here once more!"

If only little Fifi were here once more! Poor Cartouche's lonely heart echoed that wish.

CHAPTER V

A PARCEL OF OLD SHOES

The day arrived when Fifi's hundred thousand francs was to be paid over to her and deposited in the bank. Fifi had taken for granted that Cartouche would be with her on that momentous occasion; but when the day came no Cartouche appeared, so she was forced to ask Madame Bourcet and Louis Bourcet to attend her. This they both agreed to do, with the utmost alacrity.

Fifi still remained perfectly and strangely docile, but her mind had begun to work normally once more, and Fifi had a very strong little mind, which could work with great vigor. She had the enormous advantage of belonging to that class of persons who always know exactly what they want, and what they do not want. She did not want to have her money where she could not get it; and banks seemed to her mysterious institutions which were designed to lock people's money up and prevent them from getting the benefit of it, but offered no

security whatever that somebody other than the owner should not get the benefit of it. She had heretofore kept all her money—when she had any —sewed up in her mattress, in a place where she could feel it, if she wished to; and the mattress was perfectly safe; whereas, she had no guaranty that the bank was.

So Fifi quietly but decisively made up her mind that she would get hold of her hundred thousand francs and put it in a safe place—that is to say, the mattress. It might not be difficult to manage. Madame Bourcet told her she must take a tin box with her, and kindly provided the box; but it was not impossible—Suppose, thought Fifi, she could quietly transfer the money to a large reticule she possessed, and put something, old shoes, for example, in the tin box she would deposit in the bank? She had plenty of old shoes in her mysterious trunk. Fifi was charmed with this notion.

On the morning of the great day she took the precaution to fill her reticule with old shoes, fasten it to her belt, and it was so well concealed by her flowing red cloak that nobody but herself knew she had a reticule. Madame Bourcet, Louis and herself were to go in the carriage of Madame Bour-

cet's brother, a professor of mathematics, who had married a fortune of two hundred thousand francs, and was held up as a model of wisdom and a prodigy of virtue therefor.

The carriage arrived, and the party set out. Louis Bourcet regarded Fifi with an eye of extreme favor. She had never asserted herself, or contradicted any one, or said a dozen words consecutively, since she had been with Madame Bourcet; and she had a hundred thousand francs of her own.

Louis thought he could not have found a wife better suited to him if she had been made to order. As she was the granddaughter to the Pope's cousin, her experiences in the street of the Black Cat were evenly balanced by her other advantages.

As they jolted soberly along, Fifi's mind was busy with her provident scheme of guarding against banks. When they reached the bank—a large and imposing establishment—they were ushered into a private room, where sat several official-looking persons. A number of transfers were made in writing, the money was produced, counted, and placed in Fifi's tin box.

This ended that part of the formalities. Then the box was to be sealed up and placed in a strong

box hired from the bank. Fifi herself carried the tin box under her cloak, and, accompanied by Madame Bourcet and Louis, went to another apartment in the bank, from which they were taken to the strong room in the basement. There Fifi solemnly handed over her tin box to be tied and sealed, and accepted a receipt for it; and it was put away securely in a little dungeon of its own.

Never was a parcel of old shoes treated with greater respect, for in it reposed the contents of Fifi's reticule, while in the reticule peacefully lay a hundred thousand francs. It had been done under the noses of Madame Bourcet and Louis—and with the utmost neatness—for Fifi was accustomed to acting, and was in no way discomposed by having people about her, but was rather steadied and emboldened.

On the return home in the carriage Louis Bourcet treated her with such distinguished consideration that he was really afraid his attentions, including the numerous games of cribbage, were compromising, but Fifi noted him not. Her mind was fixed on the contents of her reticule, and the superior satisfaction it is to have one's money safe in a mattress where one can get at it, instead of

being locked up in a bank where everybody could get at it except one's self.

That night, while Madame Bourcet snored and snoozed peacefully, Fifi, by the light of a solitary candle, was down on her knees, sewing her money up in the mattress. She made a hard little knob of it right in the middle, so she could feel it every time she turned over in bed. Then, climbing into bed, she slept the sleep of conscious innocence and peace.

The next event in Fifi's life was to be her presentation to the Holy Father. For this Madame Bourcet severely coached Fifi. She was taught how to walk, how to speak, how to curtsey, how to go in and how to go out of the room on the great occasion. Fifi learned with her new docility and obedience, but had a secret conviction that she would forget it all as soon as the occasion came to use it.

A week or two after Fifi had rescued her money from the bank the day arrived for her presentation to the Holy Father, who had personally appointed the time. Since Fifi's journey from Italy in her childhood, she had never been so far from the street of the Black Cat as Fontainebleau, and the length

and expense of the journey impressed her extremely. Louis Bourcet did not accompany Madame Bourcet and Fifi on the visit, but it was understood that Madame Bourcet should present his application for Fifi's hand.

It was a soft, mild day in February, with a hint of spring in the air, that they set forth in a rickety coach for Fontainebleau. Fifi wore the hideous brown gown with the green spots in it, and felt exactly as she did the night she played *Léontine* in the blue silk robe with the grease spot in the back. If the grease spot had been noticed everything would have been ruined—and if the Holy Father should notice the brown gown! Fifi felt that it would mean wholesale disaster. She comforted herself, however, with the reflection that the Holy Father probably knew nothing about ladies' gowns; and then, she had never forgotten the extreme kindness of the Holy Father's eyes the night she peered at him in the coach.

"And after all," she thought, "although Cartouche laughed at me for thinking the Holy Father had looked at me that night, I know he did—perhaps I am like my father or my grandfather, and that was why he looked." And then she remem-

bered what Cartouche had said about the private soldiers not being afraid when the Emperor talked with them. "It will be the same with the Holy Father," she thought. "He is so far above me—why, it would be ridiculous for me to be afraid of him."

It took all of three hours to get to Fontainebleau, and Fifi felt that the world was a very large place indeed. They drove through the splendid park and dismounted before the great château. Then, Madame Bourcet showing some cabalistic card or other token, it was understood that the visit of the two ladies was expected by the Pope. They were escorted up the great horseshoe stairs and into a small salon, where luncheon was served to them, after their long drive. Madame Bourcet was too elegant to eat much, but Fifi, whose appetite had been in abeyance ever since she left the street of the Black Cat, revived, and she devoured her share with a relish. It was the first time she had been hungry since she had had enough to eat.

Presently a sour-looking ecclesiastic came to escort them to the presence of the Holy Father. The ecclesiastic was clearly in a bad humor. The Holy Father was always being appealed to by widows

with grievances, real or imaginary, young ladies who did not want to marry the husbands selected for them, young men who had got themselves in discredit with their families or superiors, and the Holy Father had a way of treating these sinners as if they were not sinners at all. Indeed, he often professed himself to be edified by their pious repentance; and the ecclesiastic never quite understood whether the Holy Father was quietly amusing himself at the expense of his household or not. But one thing was certain to the ecclesiastic's mind: the Holy Father had not that horror of sinners which the world commonly has, and was far too easy on them.

With these thoughts in mind, he introduced Madame Bourcet into the Pope's cabinet, while Fifi remained in the anteroom, guarded by another ecclesiastic, who looked much more human than his colleague. This last one thought it necessary to infuse courage into Fifi concerning the coming interview, but to his amazement found Fifi not in the least afraid.

"I don't know why, Monsieur, I should be afraid," she said. "A friend of mine—Cartouche —says the private soldiers are not the least afraid

of the Emperor, and are perfectly at ease when he speaks to them, while the councillors of state and the marshals and the great nobles can not look him in the eye."

"And may I ask who is this Cartouche, Mademoiselle?" asked the ecclesiastic.

"He is a friend of mine," replied Fifi warily.

At last, after twenty minutes, Madame Bourcet came out. She was pale and agitated, but showed satisfaction in every feature.

"The Holy Father approves of my nephew, provided you have no objection to him," she whispered. And the next moment Fifi found herself alone with the Holy Father.

Although the afternoon was mild and sunny, a large fire was burning on the hearth, and close to it, in a large armchair, sat Pius the Seventh. He gave Fifi the same impression of whiteness and benevolence he had given her at that chance meeting three months before.

As Fifi entered she made a low bow—not the one that Madame Bourcet had taught her, but a much better one, taught her by her own tender little heart. And instantly, as before, there was an electric sympathy established between the old man

and the young girl, as the old and young eyes exchanged confidences.

"My child," were the Holy Father's first words, in a voice singularly young and sweet for an old man. "I have seen you before, and now I know why it was that the sight of your eyes so moved me. You are my Barnabas' granddaughter."

And then Fifi made one of the most outlandish speeches imaginable for a young girl to make to the Supreme Pontiff. She said:

"Holy Father, as I looked into your eyes that night when your coach was passing through the street of the Black Cat, I said to myself, 'There is an old man with a father's heart,' and I felt as if I had seen my own father."

And instead of meeting this speech with a look of cold reproof, the Holy Father's eyes grew moist, and he said:

"It was the cry of kindred between us. Now, sit near to me—not in that armchair."

"Here is a footstool," cried Fifi, and drawing the footstool up to the Holy Father's knees, she seated herself with no more fear than Cartouche had of his Emperor.

"Now, my child," said the Holy Father, "the

old must always be allowed to tell their stories first, the young have time to wait. I know that you can not have seen your grandfather, or even remember your own father, he died so young."

"Yes, Holy Father, I was so little when he died."

"I could have loved him as a son, if I had known him," the Holy Father continued, speaking softly as the old do of a bygone time. "But never was any one so much a part of my heart as Barnabas was. We were born within a month of each other, at Cesena, a little old town at the foot of the Apennines. I think I never saw so pretty and pleasant an old town as Cesena—so many fine young men and excellent maidens, such venerable old people. One does not see such nowadays."

Fifi said nothing, but she did not love the Holy Father less for this simplicity of the old which is so like the simplicity of the young.

"Barnabas and I grew up together in an old villa, all roses and honeysuckles outside, all rats and mice within—but we did not mind the rats and mice. When we grew out of our babyhood into two naughty, troublesome boys, we thought it fine sport to hunt the poor rats and torture them. I was worse in that respect than Barnabas, who was

ever a better boy than I. But we had other amusements than that. We loved to climb into the blue hills about Cesena, and when we were old enough to be trusted by ourselves we would sometimes spend days in those far-off hills, with nothing but bread and cheese and wild grapes to live on. We slept at night on the ground, rolled in our blankets. We were hardy youngsters, and I never had sweeter sleep than in those summer nights on the hard ground, with the kind stars keeping watch over us."

Fifi said no word. The old man was living over again that sweet, young time, and from it was borne the laughter, faint and afar off, the smiles so softly tender, the tears robbed of all their saltness; he was once more, in thought, a little boy with his little playmate on the sunny slopes of the Apennines.

Presently he spoke again, looking into Fifi's eyes, so like those of the dead and gone comrade of the old Cesena days.

"Barnabas, although of better natural capacity than I, did not love the labor of reading. He chose that I should read, and tell him what I read; and so he knew all that I knew and more besides,

being of sharper and more observant mind. We never had a difference except once. It was over a cherry tart—what little gluttons we were! When we quarreled about the tart our mothers divided it, and for punishment condemned us both to eat our share alone. And what do you think was the result? Neither one of us would touch it—and then we cried and made up our quarrel; it was our first and last, and we were but ten years old."

Fifi listened with glowing eyes. These little stories of his youth, long remembered, made Fifi feel as if the Holy Father were very human, after all.

The old man paused, and his expressive eyes grew dreamy as he gazed at Fifi. She brought back to him, as never before, the dead and gone time: the still, ancient little town, lying as quietly in the sunlight as in the moonlight, the peaceful life that flowed there so placidly and innocently. He seemed to hear again the murmuring of the wind in the fir trees of the old garden and the delicate cooing of the blue and white pigeons in the orchard. Once more he inhaled the aromatic scent of the burning pine cones, as Barnabas and himself, their two boyish heads together, hung over

the scanty fire in the great vaulted kitchen of the old villa. All, all, were gone; the villa had fallen to decay; the orchard and the garden were no more; only the solemn fir trees and the dark blue peaks of the Apennines remained unchanged. And here was a girl with the same eyes, dark, yet softly bright, of his playfellow and more than brother of fifty years ago!

Fifi spoke no word. The only sound in the small, vaulted room was the faint crackling of the burning logs, across which a brilliant bar of sunlight had crept stealthily. As the Holy Father paused and looked at Fifi, there was a gentle deprecation in his glance; he seemed to be saying: "Bear with age a while, O glorious and pathetic youth! Let me once more dream your dreams, and lay aside the burden of greatness." And the old man did not continue until he saw in Fifi's eyes that she was not wearied with him; then he spoke again.

"When we were ten years old we were taught to serve on the altar. Barnabas served with such recollection, such beautiful precision, that it was like prayer to see him. He was a handsome boy, and in his white surplice and red cassock, his face

glowing with the noble innocence and simplicity of a good boyhood, he looked like a young archangel."

"And yourself, Holy Father?" asked Fifi.

"Ah, I was very unlike Barnabas. I was but an ordinary-looking boy, and I often fell asleep while I was sitting by the priest during the sermon, and in full view of the congregation. We had a worthy old priest, who would let me sleep during the sermon, but would pinch me smartly to wake me up when it was over and it was time again to go on the altar. So I devised a way to keep myself awake. I hid a picture book in the sleeve of my cassock, and during the sermon, while the priest who was on the altar had his eyes fixed on the one who was preaching in the pulpit, I slipped out my picture book, and began to look at it stealthily, —but not so stealthily that the priest did not see me, and, quietly reaching over, took it out of my hand and put it in the pocket of his cassock. I plotted revenge, however. Presently, when the priest went up on the altar and is forbidden to leave it, he turned and motioned to me for the water, which it was my duty to have ready. I whispered to him, 'Give me my picture book, and

I will give you the water.' Of course, he had to give me the picture book, and then I gave him the water. He did not tell my parents on me, wherein he failed in his duty; but he gave me, after mass, a couple of sound slaps—and I played no more tricks on him."

"Holy Father, you must have been a flesh-and-blood boy," said Fifi, softly.

The Holy Father laughed—a fresh, youthful laugh, like his voice.

"Formerly I judged myself harshly. Now I know that, though I was not a very good boy, I was not a bad boy. I was not so good a boy as Barnabas. He had no vocation for the priesthood; but in my eighteenth year the wish to be a priest awoke in me. And the hardest of all the separations which my vocation entailed was the parting with Barnabas. He went to Piacenza and became an advocate. He married and died within a year, leaving a young widow and one child—your father. They were well provided for, and the mother's family took charge of the widow and of the child. But the widow, too, soon died, and only your father was left. I often wished to see him, and my heart yearned like a father's over him, but I was a poor

parish priest, far away from him, and could hear nothing from him. Then in the disorders that followed the French Revolution one lost sight of all that one had ever known and loved. I caused diligent inquiry to be made—I was a bishop then, and could have helped Barnabas' son—but I could not find a trace of him. He, like Barnabas, had married and died young, leaving an only child—yourself—and, I knew it not! The great whirlpool of the Revolution seemed to swallow up everything. But on the night of my arrival in Paris, as we passed slowly along that narrow street, and I saw your face peering into my carriage, it was as if my Barnabas had come back to me. You are more like him than I believed any child could be like its father. So, when I heard, through the agency of the Emperor, that a young relative of mine, by name Chiaramonti, was in Paris, earning her living, I felt sure it was the young girl who looked into my carriage that night."

"But I am not earning my living now, Holy Father."

"So I hear. You have had strange good fortune—good fortune in having done honest work in your poverty, and good fortune in being under

the charge of the excellent and respectable Madame Bourcet, since there was no need for you to work."

"But—" Here Fifi paused and struggled for a moment with herself, then burst out: "I was happier, far, when I was earning my living. The theater was small, and ill lighted, and my wages were barely enough to live upon, and I often was without a fire; but at least I had Cartouche and Toto."

"And who are Cartouche and Toto?" asked the Holy Father, mildly.

Then Fifi told the story of Cartouche; how brave he was at the bridge of Lodi; how he had befriended her, and stood between her and harm; and, strange to say, the Pope appeared not the least shocked at things that would have paralyzed Madame Bourcet and Louis Bourcet. Fifi told him all about the thirty francs she had saved up for the cloak, and the spending it in buying Toto, and the Holy Father laughed outright. He asked many questions about the theater, and the life of the people there, and agreed with Fifi when she said sagely:

"Cartouche says there is not much more of virtue in one calling than another, and that those

people, like poor actors and actresses, who live from hand to mouth, and can't be very particular, are in the way of doing more kindnesses for each other than people who lead more regular lives. Cartouche, you know, Holy Father, is a plain, blunt man."

"Like Mark Antony," replied the Pope, smiling. Fifi had never heard of such a person as Mark Antony, so very wisely held her peace.

"But this Cartouche seems to be an honest fellow," added the Pope.

"Holy Father," cried Fifi, earnestly, "Cartouche is as honest as you are!"

"I should like to see him," said the Holy Father, smiling at Fifi.

"If I could, I would make him come to you—but he will not even come to see me," said Fifi sadly. "Before he took me to Madame Bourcet's he told me I must leave my old life behind me. He said, 'It will be hard, Fifi, but it must be done resolutely.' I said: 'At least if I see no one else of those people, whom I really love, now that I am separated from them—except Julie Campionet'—I shall always hate Julie Campionet—'I shall see you.' 'No,' said Cartouche, in an obstinate voice that I

knew well,—Cartouche is as obstinate as a donkey when he wishes to be,—'if you see me you will have a new struggle every time we part. Years from now, when you are fixed in another life, when you are suitably married, it will do you no harm to see me, but not now,'—and actually, Holy Father, that mean, cruel, heartless Cartouche has kept his word, and has not been near me, or even answered my letters."

"Cartouche is a sensible fellow," said the Holy Father, under his breath.

Luckily Fifi did not catch the words, or she would, in her own mind, have stigmatized the Holy Father as also mean, cruel and heartless, just like Cartouche.

"Very well," said the Pope aloud, "tell me about Julie Campionet. Why do you hate her?"

"Oh, Holy Father, Julie Campionet is a minx. She married the manager against his will, and has stolen all my best parts, and has made everybody at the theater forget there ever was a Mademoiselle Fifi. You can't imagine a person more evil than Julie Campionet."

"Wicked, wicked Julie Campionet," said the Holy Father softly; and Fifi knew he was laugh-

ing at her. Then he grew serious and said: "My child, it is important—nay, necessary—for you to be properly married. You are too young, too friendless, too inexperienced, to be safe until you have the protection of a good husband. Madame Bourcet has brought me proofs of the worth and respectability of her nephew, Monsieur Louis Bourcet, and, as the head of your family, I urge you to marry this worthy young man."

Fifi sat still, the dazed, submissive look coming back into her face. Everything seemed to compel her to marry Louis Bourcet. As the Holy Father had said, she must marry some one. She felt a sense of despair, which involved resignation to her fate. The Holy Father looked at her sharply, but said gently:

"Is there no one else?"

"No one, Holy Father," replied Fifi.

There was no one but Cartouche; and Cartouche would neither see her nor write to her, and besides had never spoken a word of love to her in his life. If she had remained at the theater she could have made Cartouche marry her; but now that was impossible. Fifi was finding out some things in her

new life which robbed her of one of her chief weapons—ignorance of convention.

"And Monsieur Bourcet is worthy?" she heard the Holy Father saying, and she replied mechanically:

"Quite worthy."

"And you do not dislike him?"

"No," said Fifi, after a moment's pause. There was not enough in Louis Bourcet to dislike.

Fifi rose. She could not bear any more on this subject. The Holy Father, smiling at Fifi's taking the initiative in closing the interview, said to her:

"Then you agree to marry Louis Bourcet?"

"I agree to marry Louis Bourcet," replied Fifi, in a voice that sounded strange in her own ears. She did not know what else to say. Two months ago she would have replied briskly, "No, indeed; I shall marry Cartouche, and nobody but Cartouche." Now, however, she seemed to be under a spell. It appeared to be arranged for her that she should marry Louis Bourcet, and Cartouche would not lift a finger to help her. And, strangest of all, in saying she would marry Louis Bourcet she

did not really know whether she meant it or not. It was all an uneasy dream.

The Pope raised his hand to bless her. Fifi, looking at him, saw that the stress of emotion at seeing her was great. The pallor of his face had given place to a dull flush, and his uplifted hand trembled.

"You will come again, my child, when your future is settled?" he said.

"Yes, Holy Father," replied Fifi, and sank on her knees to receive his blessing.

As she walked toward the door, the Holy Father called to her:

"Remember that Julie Campionet, in spite of her crimes toward you, is one of God's children."

Fifi literally ran out of the room. It seemed to her as if the Holy Father were taking Julie Campionet's part.

CHAPTER VI

THE BLUE SATIN BED

Two weeks after the visit to Fontainebleau came the crisis—for Fifi was as surely tending toward a crisis as water flows downward and sparks fly upward. Madame Bourcet, armed with the Holy Father's approval, represented to Fifi the necessity for her marrying Louis Bourcet. Fifi listened silently. Then, Madame Bourcet, eagerly taking silence for consent, said that Louis would that very evening accept formally of Fifi's hand. To this also Fifi made no reply, and Madame Bourcet left the room fully persuaded that Fifi was reveling in rapture at the thought of acquiring an epitome of all the virtues in Louis Bourcet.

It was during the morning, and in the snuff-colored drawing-room, that the communication was made. Fifi felt a great wave of doubt and anxiety swelling up in her heart. For the first time she was brought face to face with the marriage problem, and it frightened her by its immensity.

If only Cartouche were there—some one to whom she could pour out her trembling, agitated heart! But Cartouche was not there, nor would he come. And suddenly, for the first time, something of the fierceness of maidenhood overwhelmed Fifi—a feeling that Cartouche should, after all, seek her—that, if he loved her, as she knew he did above everything on earth, he should speak and not shame her by his silence.

Then, the conviction that Cartouche preferred her good to his, that he thought she would be happier married to another and a different man, and held himself honestly unworthy to marry her, brought a flood of tenderness to her heart. She had seen Cartouche turn red and pale when she kissed him, and avoid her innocent familiarities, and she knew well enough what it meant. But if he would not come, nor speak, nor write,—and everybody, even the Holy Father, was urging her to marry Louis Bourcet; and a great, strong chain of circumstances was dragging her toward the same end—oh, what a day of emotions it was to Fifi!

She knew not how it passed, nor what she said or did, nor what she ate and drank; she only

waited, as if for the footfall of fate, for the hour when Louis Bourcet would arrive. He came at eight, punctual to the minute. Punctuality, like every other virtue, was his. Madame Bourcet whispered something to him, and Louis, for the first time, touched Fifi's hand and brushed it with his lips, Fifi standing like a statue. The crisis was rapidly becoming acute.

At nine o'clock the cribbage board was brought out; Madame Bourcet dutifully fell asleep, and Louis, with the air of doing the most important thing in the world, took from his pocket a small picture of himself, which he presented to Fifi with a formal speech, of which she afterward could not recall one word. Nor could she remember what he talked about during the succeeding half-hour before Madame Bourcet waked up. Then Louis rose to go, and something was said about happiness and economy in the management of affairs; and Louis announced that owing to the necessity of procuring certain papers from Strasburg, where his little property lay, the marriage contract could not be signed for a month yet, and inquired if Fifi would be ready to marry him at the end of the month. Fifi instantly replied yes, and then the

crisis was over. From that moment nothing on earth would have induced Fifi to marry Louis Bourcet.

She did not, of course, put this in words, but sent poor Louis off with her promise to marry him in a month. Nevertheless, by one of those processes of logic which Fifi could not formulate to save her life, but which she could act up to in the teeth of fire and sword, the promise to marry Louis Bourcet settled for all time that she would not marry him.

Up to that moment all had been vague, agitating, mysterious and compelling. She felt herself driven, if not to marry Louis Bourcet, to act as if she meant to marry him. But once she had promised, once she had something tangible to go upon, her spirit burst its chains, and she was once more free. She had no more notion of marrying Louis Bourcet then than she had of trying to walk on her head. And she felt such a wild, tempestuous joy—the first flush of happiness she had known since the wretched lottery ticket had drawn the prize. She was so happy that she was glad to escape to her own room. She carried in her hand the picture of Louis Bourcet, and did not

know she held it until she put it down on her mantelpiece and saw in the mirror above it her own smiling, glowing face.

"No, Louis," she said to the picture, shaking her head solemnly, "it is not to be. I have been a fool heretofore in not saying outright that I wouldn't marry you to save your life. But now my mind is made up. Nobody can make me marry you, and I would not do it if Cartouche, the Holy Father and the Emperor all commanded me to marry you!"

Then an impish thought came into Fifi's head, for Fifi was in some respects a cruel young person. She would make Louis himself refuse to marry her and contrive so that all the blame would be visited upon the innocent Louis, while she, the wicked Fifi, would go free. In a flash it was revealed to her; it was to get rid of her hundred thousand francs. Then Louis would not marry her—and oh, rapture! Cartouche would.

"He can't refuse," thought Fifi in an ecstasy. "When I have been jilted and cruelly used, and have no money, then I can go back to the stage, and everybody will know me as Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, granddaughter of the Pope's cousin, who won the great prize in the lottery; everybody

will flock to see me, as they did the last two weeks I played; and I shall have forty francs the week, and Cartouche, and love and work and peace and Toto, and no Louis Bourcet! And how angry Julie Campionet will be!"

It was so deliciously easy to get at her money—a rip and a stitch afterward—ten thousand francs squandered before Louis Bourcet's eyes. Fifi thought the loss of the first ten thousand would rid her of her fiancé, but she knew she could never get Cartouche as long as she had even ten thousand francs left, and she realized fully that it was Cartouche that she wanted most of anything in the world. The Holy Father would probably scold her a little, but Fifi felt sure, if she could only tell the Holy Father just how she felt and how good Cartouche was, and also how odiously good Louis Bourcet was, he would forgive her.

The more Fifi thought of this scheme of getting rid of Louis Bourcet and entrapping Cartouche the more rapturous she grew. She had two ways of expressing joy and thankfulness—praying and dancing. She plumped down on her knees, and for about twenty seconds thanked God earnestly for having shown her the way to get rid of Louis

Bourcet—for Fifi's prayers, like herself, were very primitive and childlike. Then, jumping up, she danced for twenty minutes, kicking as high as she could, until she finally kicked the picture of Louis Bourcet off the mantelpiece to the floor, on which it fell with a sharp crash.

Madame Bourcet, in the next room, stirred at once. Fifi again plumped down on her knees, and when Madame Bourcet opened the door Fifi was deeply engaged in saying her prayers. Madame Bourcet shut the door softly—the noise could not have been in Fifi's room.

As soon as Madame Bourcet was again snoozing, Fifi, moving softly about, lighted her candle and wrote a letter to Cartouche.

"Cartouche, my mind is made up. This evening I promised Louis Bourcet, in Madame Bourcet's presence, to marry him. When I had done it I felt as if a load were lifted off my mind, for as soon as the words were out of my mouth I determined that nothing on earth should induce me to keep my promise. I feel that I am right, Cartouche, and I have not felt so pious for a long time. I don't know how it will be managed. I

am only certain of one thing, and that is that Louis Bourcet will never become Monsieur Fifi Chiaramonti—for that is just what it would amount to, he is so good and so colorless. I am not in the least sorry for Louis. I am only sorry for myself that I have been bothered with him so long, and besides, I wish to marry some one else. Fifi."

Fifi crept into bed after writing this letter. For the first time she found the hard lump in the middle of her mattress uncomfortable.

"Never mind," thought Fifi to herself, "I shall soon be rid of it, and sleep in peace, as I haven't done since I had it."

Fifi's dreams were happy that night, and when she waked in the morning she felt a kind of dewy freshness in her heart, like the awakening of spring. It was springtime already, and as Fifi lay cosily in her little white bed she contrived joyous schemes for her own benefit, which some people might have called plotting mischief. She reasoned with herself thus:

"Fifi, you have been miserable ever since you got the odious, hateful hundred thousand francs, and it was nasty of Cartouche to give you the lottery

ticket. Fifi, you are not very old, but you are of the sort which does not change, and you will be Fifi as long as you live. You can not be happy away from Cartouche and the theater and Toto—unfeeling wretch that you are, to let Toto be torn from you! So the only thing to do is to return to love and work. If you spend all your money Louis Bourcet would not marry you to save your life, and then you can go back to the theater and make Cartouche marry you. Oh, how simple it is! Stupid, stupid Fifi, that you did not think of this before!" And, throbbing with happiness at the emancipation before her, Fifi rose and dressed herself. She was distracted by the riotous singing of the robins in the one solitary tree in the courtyard. Heretofore the little birds had been mute and half frozen, but this morning, in the warm spring sun, they sang in ecstasy.

Fifi not only felt different, but she actually looked so; and the blitheness which shone in her eyes when she went to ask Madame Bourcet if she might have Angéline, the sour maid-of-all-work, to go with her to the shops that morning might have awakened suspicion in most minds. But not in Madame Bourcet's. Fifi slyly let drop some-

thing about her trousseau, and Madame Bourcet hastened to say that she might take Angéline.

In a little while the two were ready to start. In her hand Fifi carried a little purse, containing twenty-one francs, and in her reticule she carried her handkerchief, her smelling-salts and ten crisp thousand-franc notes.

"How shall I ever spend it all!" she thought, with a little dismay; and then, having some curious odds and ends of sense in her pretty head, she concluded: "Oh, it is easy enough. I have often heard Cartouche say that nobody ever yet tried to squander money who did not find a dozen helpers on every hand."

Paris is beautiful on a spring morning, with the sun shining on the splashing fountains and the steel blue river, and the streets full of cheerful-looking people. It was the first mild, soft day of March, and everybody was trying to make believe it was May. The restaurants had placed their chairs and tables out of doors, and made a brave showing of greenery with watercress and a few little radishes. Itinerant musicians were grinding away industriously, and some humorous cab-drivers had paid five centimes for a sprig of green to stick behind

the ears of their patient horses. All Paris was out of doors, helping the birds and leaves to make the spring.

Fifi strolled along and found the streets almost as pleasant as the street of the Black Cat, except that she knew everybody in the street of the Black Cat and knew no one at all of all this merry throng. Her first incursion was into a chocolate shop, where she treated both herself and Angéline in a princely manner, as became a lady who had ten notes of a thousand francs to dispose of in a morning's shopping.

While they were sipping their chocolate Fifi was wondering how she could manage to leave Angéline in the lurch and slip off by herself—for Angéline might possibly make trouble for her when she came to dispensing her wealth as she privately planned. But in this, as in all things else that day, fortune favored Fifi. Afar off was heard the rat-aplan of a marching regiment, with the merry laughter and shuffle of feet of an accompanying crowd.

"What so easy as to get carried along with that crowd?" thought Fifi, as she ran to the door, where the proprietor and all the clerks as well as the cus-

tomers were flying. It was the day of a grand review at Longchamps, and the sight of the marching regiment, with the band ringing out in rhythmic beauty, seemed the finest thing in the world.

Fifi found herself, with very little effort on her part, pushed out on the sidewalk, and the next thing she was being swept along with the eager crowd following the soldiers. At the corner of a large street the regiment turned off toward the Champs Elysées, the crowd parted, and Fifi saw her way back clear to the chocolate shop. But staring her in the face was a magnificent furniture and bric-à-brac shop, while next it was a superb *magasin des modes* with a great window full of gowns, wraps and hats.

Here was the place for Fifi to get rid of her ten thousand francs. It seemed to Fifi as if a benignant Providence had rewarded her virtuous design by placing her just where she was; so she walked boldly into the *magasin des modes.*

The manager of the place, a handsome, showily-dressed and bejeweled woman, looked suspiciously at a young and pretty girl, arriving without maid or companion of any sort—but Fifi, bringing into play some of the arts she had learned at the Im-

perial Theater, sank, apparently breathless, into a seat; told of her being swept away from her companion, and offered to pay for a messenger to hunt up Angéline. Meanwhile she artlessly let out that she was Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, in search of articles for her trousseau.

Her story was well known; everybody in Paris had heard of Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, of the Imperial Theater, who had drawn the first prize in the lottery, and instantly all was curiosity to see her and alertness to attend her—except as to sending for Angéline. There was an unaccountable slowness about that, except on the theory that it would be well to show Fifi some of the creations of the establishment before the arrival of the elder person, who might throw cold water on the prospective purchases. And then began the comedy, so often enacted in the world, of the cunning hypocrite being unconsciously the dupe of the supposed victim.

Fifi was careful to hint that her marriage was being arranged; and if anything could have added to Fifi's joy and satisfaction it was the determination on the part of the shop people to embody in her trousseau all the outlandish things they pos-

sessed. This suited Fifi exactly. Louis Bourcet was as finically particular about colors as he was about behavior, and both he and Madame Bourcet were privately determined that Fifi should go through life in brown gowns with dark green spots, like the one which had so excited her disgust in the first instance. Knowing this, Fifi concluded to administer a series of shocks in every one of her purchases, and went about to do this with a vim and thoroughness characteristic of her.

The first gown they showed her nearly made her scream with delight. It was almost enough to make Louis Bourcet break their engagement at sight. It was a costume of a staring yellow brocade, with large purple flowers on it, and was obviously intended for a woman nine feet high and three feet broad—and Fifi was but a slender twig of a girl. One huge flower covered her back, and another her chest, while three or four went around the vast skirt which trailed a yard behind. The manager put it on Fifi, while her assistants and fellow conspirators joined with her in declaring that the gown was ravishing on Fifi, which it was in a way.

Fifi paraded solemnly up and down before the

large swinging mirror, surveying herself. She was a quaint object in the great yellow and purple gown, and she knew it. Her face broke into a shower of smiles and dimples.

"It will answer my purpose exactly," she cried. This was true, as it was calculated to give Madame Bourcet, and especially Louis Bourcet, nervous convulsions.

"Show me a hat to go with it—the largest hat you have."

The hat was produced—a nightmare, equal to the yellow and purple brocade. Flowers, beads, ribbons and feathers weighed it down, but Fifi demanded more of everything to be put on it, particularly feathers. When she put the hat on, with the gown, one of the young women in the establishment gave a half shriek of something between a laugh and a scream. A look from the manager sent the culprit like a shot into the back part of the shop.

Fifi, gravely examining herself in the glass, declared she was charmed with her costume and would wear it on the day of her civil marriage. Then she demanded a cloak.

"One that would look well on a dowager em-

press," she said with a grand air, knowing she had ten thousand francs in her pocket.

One was produced which might have looked well on the dowager empress of China, but scarcely on an occidental. It was a stupendous stripe of red and green satin, which might have served for the gridiron on which Saint Lawrence was broiled alive. It had large sleeves, which Fifi insisted must be trimmed with heavy lace and deep fur. In a twinkling this was fastened on, and Fifi approved.

"And now a fan," she said.

Dozens of fans were produced, but none of them preposterous enough to suit Fifi's purpose and her costume. At last she compromised on a large pink one with a couple of birds of paradise on it.

Oh, what a picture was Fifi, parading up and down before the mirror, and saying to herself:

"I think this will finish him."

The amount for the costume, cloak, hat and fan was nearly two thousand francs. Fifi regretted it was not more.

"And now," she said, "some negligées, with rich effects; you understand."

Fifi's taste being pretty well understood in the establishment by this time, some negligées were

produced, in which Fifi arrayed herself and looked like a parroquet. Then came evening gowns. There was one in particular which Fifi thought might be the death of the Bourcets. It was a short, scant, diaphanous Greek costume, which was so very Greek that it could only have been worn with propriety in the days of the nymphs, the fauns and the dryads.

"This, without a petticoat, I am sure, will rid me of Louis Bourcet," thought Fifi, "but I must never let Cartouche see it, or he will kill me."

Fifi, being fatigued with her exertions—for her purchases were calculated to fatigue the eye as well as the mind, ordered the articles selected to be sent that day to Madame Bourcet's.

"And the bill, Mademoiselle?" asked the manager in a dulcet voice.

"Make it out," replied Fifi debonairly, "and I will pay it now."

There was a pause for the manager and the clerks to recover their breath, while Fifi sat quite serene. It did not take a minute for the bill to be made out, however,—four thousand, nine hundred and forty-four francs, twenty-five centimes. Fifi was cruelly disappointed; she had reckoned on get-

ting rid of more of her money. But still this was a beginning, so she handed over five notes of a thousand francs each, and gravely counted her change: fifty-five francs, seventy-five centimes.

Then, and then only, was a message sent after Angéline to the chocolate shop.

But Angéline could not be found. She had seen Fifi swept away, as she thought, by the crowd, and had rushed out to join her; but Fifi had no mind to be caught, and Angéline found herself flopping about wildly, shrieking at the passers-by, without any stops whatever between her words:

"Have you seen Mademoiselle Fifi Mademoiselle Chiaramonti I lost her in the chocolate shop oh what will Madame Bourcet say good people I am sure she is lost for good and a hundred thousand francs in bank and what is to be become of Monsieur Louis where *can* Mademoiselle Fifi be?" and much more of the same sort.

Fifi, however, was half a mile away, and having exhausted the resources of the shop for gowns, tripped gaily into the furniture shop next door.

Here, thought Fifi cheerfully, she would be able to make substantial progress toward getting rid of Louis Bourcet and marrying Cartouche. She

saw many splendid gilt tables, chairs, divans, cabinets and the like, which she, with her limited experience in furniture buying in the street of the Black Cat, thought must be very dear: some of the most splendid pieces must cost as much as four hundred francs, thought innocent Fifi.

But it was not enough for a thing to be expensive; it must be outrageous in taste and design to be available for her purpose, and with this in view she roved around the establishment, attended by a clerk of lofty manners and a patronizing air. At last, however, she pounced upon an object worthy to be classed with the yellow and purple brocade. This was a huge, blue satin bed, with elaborate gilt posts, and cornice, vast curtains of lace as well as satin, cords, tassels, and every other species of ornament which could be fastened to a bed.

Fifi, who had never seen anything like it before, gasped in her amazement and delight, the clerk meanwhile surveying her with an air of condescending amusement.

Here was the thing to drive Louis Bourcet to madness, thought Fifi, surveying the bed rapturously. If she could once get it into the house, it would be difficult to get it out, it was so large

and so complex, and so very formidable. Fifi's resolution was taken in an instant. She meant to have it if it cost a thousand francs. She rather resented the air of patronage with which the clerk explained the beauties of the bed to her. He seemed to be saying all the time:

"This is but time wasted. You can never afford anything so expensive as this."

Fifi, calling up her talents as an actress, which were not inconsiderable, accentuated her innocent and open-mouthed wonder at the size and splendor of the bed. Then, intending to make a grand stroke which would paralyze the clerk, she said coolly:

"I will give you fifteen hundred francs for this bed."

The clerk's nose went into the air.

"I have the honor to inform Mademoiselle that this bed was made with a view to purchase by the Empress, but the cost was so great that the Emperor objected and would not allow the Empress to buy it. The price is five thousand francs; no more and no less."

Fifi was secretly staggered by this, but she now regarded the clerk as an enemy to be van-

quished at any price—and vengeance seemed to her cheap at five thousand francs. Fifi had a revengeful nature, which did not stop at trifles. So, after a moment's pause to recover herself, she said, still coolly:

"Well, then, the price is exorbitant, but I will take the bed."

The clerk, instead of succumbing to this, retained his composure in the most exasperating manner. He only asked, with a shade of incredulity in his voice:

"If Mademoiselle will kindly give us the money in gold or notes it can be arranged at once."

Fifi, in the most debonair manner in the world, opened her reticule and produced five notes for a thousand francs each.

The clerk, unlike Fifi, knew nothing of the art of acting, and looked, as he was, perfectly astounded. His limp hand fell to his side, his jaw dropped open and he backed away from Fifi as if he thought she might explode. Fifi, as calm as a May zephyr, continued:

"I desire that this bed be sent between ten and two to-morrow to the address I shall give. I shall only take it on that condition."

There was method in this. Fifi had suddenly remembered that the next morning was Thursday. On that day, every week, Madame Bourcet indulged in the wild orgy of attending a lecture on mathematics delivered by her brother, the professor of mathematics, before a lyceum frequented by several elderly and mathematical ladies, like Madame Bourcet. When she was out of the house was clearly the time to get the preposterous bed in; and Fifi made her arrangements accordingly.

Nothing could have been more impressive than Fifi's studied calmness and coolness while giving directions about the bed. The clerk went after the proprietor, who could not conceal his surprise at a young lady like Fifi going about unattended, and with five thousand francs in her pocket. Fifi finally condescended to explain that she was Mademoiselle Chiaramonti. That cleared up everything. The proprietor, of course, had heard her story, and rashly and mistakenly assumed that Fifi was a little fool, but at all events, he had made a good bargain with her, and he bowed her out of the establishment as if she had been a princess as well as a fool.

Once outside in the clear sunshine, Fifi was tri-

umphant. She felt that a long step had been taken toward getting rid of Louis Bourcet. And, after all, it was just as easy to spend five thousand francs as five, if one has the money. She had spent infinitely more time and trouble over her thirty-franc cloak than over all her extraordinary purchases of the last hour.

"The gowns are frightful enough, as well as the bills," she thought to herself, walking away from the shop, "and the bed is really a crushing revelation—but it is not enough—it is not enough."

Then an inspiration came to her which brought her to a standstill.

"I must go to a monkey shop and buy a monkey —but—but I am afraid of monkeys. However—" —here Fifi felt an expansion of the soul—"when one loves, as I love Cartouche, one must be prepared for sacrifices. So I shall sacrifice myself. I shall buy a monkey."

But it is easier to say one will buy a monkey than to buy one. Fifi walked on, pondering how to make this sublime sacrifice to her affections.

The sense of freedom, the exhilaration of the spring day, made themselves felt in her blood. And then, for the first time, she also felt the berserker

madness for shopping which is latent in the feminine nature. The fact that reason and common sense were to be outraged as far as possible rather added zest to the enjoyment.

"This is the real way to go shopping," thought Fifi, with delight. "Spending for the pleasure of spending—buying monkeys and everything else one fancies. It can only be done once in a blue moon; even the Empress can not do it whenever she likes."

She walked on, drinking in with delight the life and sunshine around her. The more she reflected upon the monkey idea the finer it appeared to her. True, she was mortally afraid of a monkey, but then she was convinced that Louis Bourcet was more afraid of monkeys than she was.

"And it is for my Cartouche—and would Cartouche hesitate at making such a sacrifice for me? No! A thousand times no! And I can not do less than all for Cartouche, whom I love. It is my duty to use every means, even a monkey, to get rid of Louis Bourcet."

But where should she find a place to buy a monkey? That she could not think of, but her

fertile mind suggested an expedient even better than the mere purchase of a single monkey. She stopped at one of those movable booths, wherein sat a man who did writing for those unable to write as well as they wished, or unable to write at all. The booth was plastered over with advertisements of articles for sale, but naturally no monkeys were offered.

The man in the booth, a bright-eyed cripple, looked up when Fifi tapped on the glass of the little open window.

"Monsieur," said Fifi, sweetly, "if you please, I am very anxious for a monkey—a dear little monkey, for a pet; but I do not know where to find one, and my family will not assist me in finding one. If I should pay you, say five francs, would you write an advertisement for a monkey, and let it be pasted with the other advertisements on your booth?"

"Ten francs," responded the man.

Fifi laid the ten francs down.

"Now, write in very large letters: 'Wanted—A monkey, for a lady's pet; must be well trained, and not malicious. Apply at No. 14 Rue de

l'Echelle. Any person bringing a monkey will receive a franc for his trouble, if the monkey is not purchased.' "

"Do you wish any snakes or parrots, Mademoiselle?" asked the man, pocketing his ten francs.

"No, thank you; the monkey, I think, will answer all my purposes," responded Fifi with dignity.

It was then past noon, and Fifi, having spent a most enjoyable morning, called a fiacre and directed the cabman to take her home.

Just as she turned into the Rue de l'Echelle she heard some one calling after her:

"Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle Fifi!"

It was Angéline, very red in the face, and running after the fiacre. Fifi had it stopped and Angéline clambered in. Before she had a chance to begin the fault-finding which is the privilege of an old servant Fifi cut the ground from under her feet.

"Why did you desert me as you did, Angéline?" cried Fifi indignantly. "You saw me swept off my feet, and carried along with the crowd, and instead of following me—"

"I did not see you, Mademoiselle—it was you—"

"You left me to my fate! What might not have happened to me alone in the streets of Paris!"

"Mademoiselle has perhaps been alone in the streets of Paris before—"

"Silence, Angéline! How dare you say that I have been alone in the streets of Paris before! Your language, as well as your conduct, is intolerable!"

"I beg Mademoiselle to remember—"

"I remember nothing but that, being sent out in your charge, you basely deserted me, and you shall answer for it; I beg of you to remember that."

Angéline was reduced by this tirade to surly silence, and, not bearing in mind that Fifi was really a very clever little actress, actually thought she was in a boiling rage. Fifi was meanwhile laughing in her sleeve.

CHAPTER VII

A MOST IMPRUDENT THING

Madame Bourcet sat in the snuff-colored drawing-room, nursing her rheumatism, when in walked Fifi as demure as the cat after it has eaten the canary. She mentioned casually that she had bought a few things for her trousseau, and Madame Bourcet presumed that the sum total of expenditure was something like a hundred francs. Still, with visions of the pink spangled gown which Fifi wished to buy for her presentation to the Holy Father, Madame Bourcet thought it well to say, warningly:

"I hope your purchases were of a sober and substantial character, warranted to wear well, and in quiet colors."

"Wait, Madame, until you see them," was Fifi's diplomatic answer.

As soon as she could, she escaped to her own room, and, locking the door, she opened her precious trunk with the relics of her theatrical life in it, and began to handle them tenderly.

"Oh, you dear old wig, how happy I was when I wore you!" she said to herself, clapping the white wig over her own rich brown hair. "When I put you on I became a marquise at the court of Louis le Grand, and how fine it seemed! Never mind, I shall be a marquise again, and get forty francs the week at least! And how nice it will be to be quarreling with Julie Campionet again, the wretch! And Duvernet—I shall not forget to remind him of how I gave him my best white cotton petticoat for his toga—and sewed it with my own fingers, too! And I shall say to him, 'Recollect, Monsieur, I am no longer Fifi, but Mademoiselle Josephine Chiaramonti, granddaughter of the cousin of a reigning sovereign, and I am the young lady who won the grand prize in the lottery, and spent it all; you never had a leading lady before who knew how to spend a hundred thousand francs.' I think I can see Duvernet now—and as I say it I shall toy with my paste brooch. I can't buy any jewels, for that wouldn't help me to get rid of Louis Bourcet, or to get Cartouche; so I shall tell Duvernet that nothing in the way of diamonds seemed worth while after those I had already."

Fifi fondled her paste brooch, which was kept in

the same shrine as the white wig, and then she clasped to her breast Cartouche's javelin, made from a broomstick, and it seemed to her almost as if she were clasping Cartouche. It put the notion into her head to write him a letter, so she hastily closed her trunk, and sat down to write.

"Cartouche, I went out this morning, and spent ten thousand francs of that odious money I won through that abominable lottery ticket you gave me. I should think you would never cease reproaching yourself if you knew how miserable that lottery ticket has made me. I bought some of the most terrible gowns you ever saw, and a bed that cost five thousand francs, and which the Empress couldn't buy. I shall tell poor Louis and Madame Bourcet that these gowns are for my trousseau—but, of course, I have not the slightest idea of marrying Louis. I made up my mind not to last night, the very moment I promised—and so I wrote to you before I slept. It is not at all difficult to spend money; it is as easy to spend five thousand francs for a bed as five, if you have the money. And I had the money in my reticule. I shan't tell you now how I got it, but I did, just the same, Cartouche.

I long to see you. I did something for you to-day that I would not do for any one else in the world. You know how afraid I am of monkeys? Well, I can not explain in a letter, but you will be pleased when I tell you all. Fifi."

It was not Louis Bourcet's habit to appear in his aunt's apartment until eight o'clock, but at six o'clock, seeing a great van drawn up before the door, from which was disgorged innumerable large parcels addressed to his fiancée, Louis, like other good men, was vanquished by his curiosity. He mounted the stairs, on which he was jostled at every step by men carrying huge pasteboard boxes of every size and shape, all addressed to Mademoiselle Chiaramonti.

Fifi stood, with a brightly smiling face, at the head of the stairs, directing the parcels to be carried into her own room. Louis, after speaking to her, ventured to say:

"The cost of your purchases must be very great."

"Yes," answered Fifi, merrily, "but when one is about to make a grand marriage, such as I am, one should have good clothes."

Louis Bourcet, thus openly tickled under the fifth rib, smiled rather anxiously, and replied:

"But one should be prudent, Mademoiselle. An extravagant wife would give me a great deal of pain."

"Ah, a woman happy enough to be married to you could not give you a moment's pain," cried Fifi tenderly.

Louis started and blushed deeply,—this open lovemaking was a new thing, and very embarrassing,—but it is difficult to tell the lady in the case that she is too demonstrative.

Fifi, with a truly impish intelligence, saw at a glance the misery she could inflict upon poor Louis by her demonstrations of affection, and the discovery filled her with unholy joy, particularly as Madame Bourcet, sitting in the snuff-colored drawing-room, was within hearing through the open door.

"Only wait," cried Fifi, as she skipped into her own room; "only wait until you see me in these things I bought to-day, and you will be as much in love with me as I am with you!"

Louis, blushing redder than any beet that ever grew, entered the snuff-colored drawing-room and

closed the door after him. Madame Bourcet's countenance showed that she had heard every word.

"In my day," said she, in a severe tone, "young ladies did not fall in love with their fiancés, much less proclaim the fact."

Louis shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

"We must make allowances, Aunt, for Mademoiselle Chiaramonti's early training—and we must not forget that her grandfather was cousin to His Holiness, and Mademoiselle has a hundred thousand francs of her own." Louis mentally added, "and a hundred thousand francs is not picked up with every girl."

"She will not have a hundred thousand francs if she goes shopping like this very often," stiffly replied Madame Bourcet. "I should not be surprised if she had squandered all of a thousand francs in one day."

Just then the door opened, and a tremendous hat, with eleven large feathers on it, and much else besides, appeared. Fifi's delicate bright face, now as solemn as a judge's, was seen under this huge creation. The red and green striped satin cloak, with the large lace and fur-trimmed sleeves, concealed some of the yellow brocade with the big

purple flowers, but some yards of it were visible, trailing on the floor. The bird of paradise fan and a muff the size of a barrel completed Fifi's costume.

Madame Bourcet gave a faint scream and Louis almost jumped out of his chair at the show. Fifi, parading solemnly up and down, surveying herself complacently, remarked:

"This is the costume I shall wear when we pay our visit of ceremony to the Holy Father, upon my marriage."

A dead pause followed. Both Madame Bourcet and Louis were too stunned to speak. Fifi, seeing to what a state they were reduced, returned to her room, and being an expert in quick changes of costume, reappeared in a few minutes wearing one of the violently sensational negligées, in which she looked like a living rainbow.

Neither Madame Bourcet nor Louis knew what to say at this catastrophe, and therefore said nothing. But Fifi was voluble enough for both. She harangued on the beauty of the costumes, and their extraordinary cheapness, without mentioning the price, and claimed to have a gem of a gown to

exhibit, which would eclipse anything she had yet shown.

When she went to put this marvelous creation on, Madame Bourcet recovered speech enough to say:

"A thousand francs, I said a few minutes ago—two thousand I say now. Only ninety-eight thousand francs of her fortune is left—of that I am sure."

"I am not sure there is so much left," responded Louis gloomily.

The door opened and a vision appeared. It was Fifi in the spangled white ball gown *à la grecque*. The narrow, scanty skirt did not reach to her ankles. The waist, according to the fashion of the time, was under her arms, and the bodice was about four inches long. There were no sleeves, only tiny straps across Fifi's white arms; and her whole outfit could have been put in Louis Bourcet's waistcoat pocket.

Madame Bourcet fell back in her chair, with a groan. Louis rose, red and furious, and said in portentous tones:

"You will excuse me, Mademoiselle, if I retire behind the screen while you remain with that costume on in my presence."

"Do you want me to take it off then?" asked Fifi airily; but Louis was already behind the screen.

"Aunt," he called out sternly, "kindly let me know when Mademoiselle Chiaramonti has retired."

"I can not," responded Madame Bourcet, briefly, "for I shall myself retire." And Madame Bourcet marched away to her own room.

"Louis," said a timid, tender little voice, "don't you think this gown more suitable to wear than the yellow brocade when we go to pay our visit of ceremony to the Holy Father?"

Louis Bourcet was near choking with wrath at this. What right had she to call him Louis? He had never asked her to do so—their engagement was not even formally announced; he had never spoken to her or of her except as Mademoiselle Chiaramonti. And that gown to go visiting the Holy Father!

"Mademoiselle," replied Louis in a voice of thunder, still from behind the screen, "I consider that gown wholly improper for you to appear before any one in, myself included."

"Just come and take a look at it," pleaded Fifi.

"I will not, Mademoiselle; and I give you warning I am now about to leave this room."

"I thought you would contrive to get a look at me, and not stick behind that screen," remarked Fifi, with a sudden explosion of laughter, as Louis stalked from behind the screen. But the injustice and impropriety of her remark was emphasized by his indignantly turning his head away from her as he made for the door.

"Oh," cried Fifi, impishly, "you can see me perfectly well in the mirror, with your head turned that way!"

An angry bang of the door after him was Louis Bourcet's only answer to this.

Fifi surveyed herself in the mirror which she had accused the innocent Louis of studying.

"This gown is perfectly outrageous, and it would be as much as my life is worth to let Cartouche see it," she thought. "But if only it can frighten off that odious, ridiculous thing, how happy I shall be!"

Fifi retired to her room. Eight o'clock was the hour when tea was served in the drawing-room, and both Madame Bourcet and Louis appeared

on the scene inwardly uncomfortable as to the meeting with Fifi. There sat Fifi, but without the least appearance of discomfort; on the contrary, more smiling and more at ease than they had ever seen her. The door to her bedroom was open, and as soon as Madame Bourcet and Louis entered they were saluted by an overwhelming odor of burning. Madame Bourcet, who was a fire-fiend, shrieked at once:

"Something is on fire! Go, go, inform the police; fetch some water, and let me faint!"

"There isn't the least danger," cried Fifi; "it is only my improper ball gown which is burning in my grate." And they saw, through the open door, the ball gown stuffed in the grate, in which a fire was smoldering. Some pieces of coal were piled upon it, to keep it from blazing up, and it was being slowly consumed, with perfect safety to the surroundings and an odor as if a warehouse were afire.

Madame Bourcet concluded not to faint, and she and Louis stood staring at each other. But they were not the only ones to be startled. The other tenants in the house had taken the alarm, and the bell in Madame Bourcet's lobby was being fran-

tically pulled. Fifi ran and opened the door. There stood Doctor Mailly, the eminent surgeon, who had the apartment above the Bourcet's; Colonel and Madame Bruart, who lived in the apartment below, and about half a dozen others of the highly respectable persons who inhabited this highly respectable house.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Fifi, in the tone of easy confidence which the stage had bred in her, "there is nothing whatever to be alarmed about. I am simply burning up a gown which Monsieur Louis Bourcet, my fiancé, objected to—and as—as—I am madly in love with him, I destroy the gown in order to win his approval. Can any of you—at least those who know what it is to love and be beloved—think me wrong?"

There was a dead silence. Louis Bourcet, his face crimson, advanced and said sternly to Fifi:

"Mademoiselle, I desire to say that I consider your conduct in regard to the gown most uncalled for, most sensational and wholly opposed to my wishes."

"So you wanted to see me wear it again, did you?" cried Fifi, roguishly; and then, relapsing into a sentimental attitude, she said: "But you

don't know how much pleasure it gives me to sacrifice that gown for you, dear Louis."

At this, Louis Bourcet, with a flaming face, replied:

"I beg of you, Mademoiselle, not to call me Louis; and your expressions of endearment are as unpleasant to me as they are improper."

The lookers-on began to laugh, and turned away, except Colonel Bruart, a fat old retired cavalry colonel, on whom a pretty face never failed of its effect.

"Mademoiselle," he cried gallantly, "if I were as young as your fiancé, you might call me all the endearing names in the dictionary and I wouldn't complain. Is this young gentleman a Frenchman?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied Fifi, sweetly.

"Then," replied Colonel Bruart, turning his broad back on the scene, "I am glad there are not many like him. Adieu, Mademoiselle."

Fifi, Madame Bourcet and Louis returned to the drawing-room. The Bourcets were stupefied. Fifi was evidently a dangerous person to adopt into a family, but a hundred thousand francs is a great

deal of money. Fifi, by way of administering a final shock, said:

"Anyway, the gown only cost five hundred francs, and that seemed to me little enough to pay for pleasing you, Louis. And yet, you do not seem pleased."

"I am not," responded Louis, who found Fifi's singular endearments as trying as her clothes.

The evening passed with the utmost constraint on every one except Fifi, who was entirely at her ease and in great spirits.

Madame Bourcet and Louis each spent a sleepless night, and next morning held a council of war in Madame Bourcet's bedroom. Another startling thought had occurred to them: where did Fifi get the money to pay for the outlandish things? On each parcel Madame Bourcet had noted the mark "Paid." Fifi had not gone to the bank; and yet, she must have had several thousand francs in hand. Possibly, she had more than a hundred thousand francs. The Holy Father might have presented her with a considerable sum of money the day he had the long interview with her.

There were many perplexing surmises; and, at

last, wearied with their anxieties, both Madame Bourcet and Louis resolved that Madame Bourcet, after attending her brother's lecture, should consult that eminent man, as an expert in managing heiresses. It had become a very serious question as to whether Fifi should be admitted into the Bourcet family or not, but then, there was the money!

Madame Bourcet was not expected to return before half-past two, as her conference with the professor was to take place after the lecture; but at two o'clock, precisely, Louis Bourcet appeared. He had spent an anxious morning. Whichever way the cat might jump would be disastrous for him. If he went on with the marriage, he was likely to die of shock at some of Fifi's vagaries; and if the marriage were declared off, there was a hundred thousand francs, and possibly more, gone, to say nothing of the last chance of being allied to a reigning sovereign. Poor Louis was beset with all the troubles of the over-righteous man.

As he entered the drawing-room, Fifi, dressed in the yellow brocade, which looked more weird than ever by daylight, ran forward to meet him.

"How glad I am that you have come!" she cried. "I have something beautiful to show you. Look!"

She threw wide her bedroom door, and there, filling up half the large room, stood the gorgeous blue satin and gold bed.

Louis was stricken dumb. He had never seen such a machine before, but being a practical person he saw at a glance its costliness. He opened his mouth to speak, but no words came. However, Fifi remarked rapturously:

"It was made for the Empress, but the Emperor, thinking the price too much, refused to take it; and it was only five thousand francs, too!"

Then, running and exhibiting the lace, the gilt tassels and other paraphernalia of the bed, Fifi concluded with saying:

"Of course, I shan't sleep in it—it's much too fine. I don't think it was ever meant to be slept in—but see—" Here Fifi raised the valance, and showed her own mattress, which she had substantial reasons for holding on to, "that's what I shall sleep on! No one shall call *me* extravagant!"

Louis retreated to the drawing-room. Fifi followed him, shutting the door carefully after her.

Just then there was a commotion and a scuffle heard outside, in the lobby, and Angéline's shrill voice raised high.

"That must be the monkeys!" cried Fifi, running out.

Two Italians, each with a robust-looking monkey, were squabbling on the stairs with Angéline. The Italians, each bent on getting in first, had begun a scuffle which was growing perilously near a fight. Neither paid the slightest attention to Angéline's fierce demand that they and their monkeys take themselves off. When Fifi appeared, both of the monkey venders burst into voluble explanations and denunciations. Fifi, however, had lost something of her cool courage. In her heart she was afraid of monkeys, and had not meant to let them get so far as the drawing-room door.

"Ah," she cried to the Italians, thinking to pacify both of them, "here is a franc apiece for your trouble, and take the monkeys away. I don't think either will suit."

"No!" shrieked both of the Italians in chorus. "We have brought our monkeys and Mademoiselle must at least examine them."

This was anything but an agreeable proposition

to Fifi; nor was she reassured by each of the Italians declaring vehemently that his rival's monkey was as fierce as a lion and a disgrace to the simian tribe. Fifi secretly thought that both of them were telling the truth in that respect, and totally disbelieved them when each swore that his own monkey was a companion fit for kings. All Fifi could do, therefore, was to say, with an assumption of bravado:

"I will give you each two francs if you will go away and bring the monkeys to-morrow."

"Three francs!" shouted one of her compatriots, while the other bawled, "Five francs!"

Fifi had as much as ten francs about her, so she gladly paid the ten francs, and the Italians departed, each swearing he would come the next day, and would, meanwhile, have the other's blood.

Fifi returned to the drawing-room. On the hearth-rug stood Louis, pale and determined.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "there must be an end of this."

"Of what?" asked Fifi, innocently.

"Either of the performances of yesterday and to-day, or of our arrangement to marry."

"O-o-o-h!" wailed Fifi, "just as I had fallen so beautifully in love with you!"

Louis's face turned paler still.

"Mademoiselle, I do not know how to take such speeches."

"I see you don't," replied Fifi.

"It is the first time I have ever been thrown with a young person of your profession," began Louis.

"Or with an heiress worth a hundred thousand francs, and the relative of a reigning sovereign—" added Fifi, maliciously.

Louis hesitated, and changed from one foot to the other. It was hardly likely that the Holy Father would let so desirable a match for his young relative escape. Louis's esteem for himself was as tall as the Vendôme column, and he naturally thought everybody took him at his own valuation. The Holy Father's possible attitude in the matter was alarming and disconcerting to poor Louis.

"And besides," added Fifi, "your attentions have been compromising. Do you recall, Monsieur—since you forbid me to call you Louis—that you have played a game of cribbage with me every evening since I have lived under your aunt's charge? Is that nothing? Is my reputation to be

sacrificed to your love of cribbage? Do you suppose that I shall let my relative, the Holy Father, remain in ignorance of those games of cribbage? Beware, Monsieur Louis Bourcet, that you are not made to repent of the heartless way in which you entrapped my affections at the cribbage-board."

And Fifi walked with great dignity into her bedroom and banged the door after her. Once inside, she opened her arms wide and whispered softly:

"Cartouche! Cartouche! You will not be any such lover as this creature!"

Meanwhile, Madame Bourcet had returned from her conference with her brother. Angéline had met her on the stairs with a gruesome tale of the blue satin bed, and the two monkeys, who had been invited to call the next day. It was too much for Madame Bourcet. She dropped on a chair as soon as she reached the drawing-room. There Louis Bourcet burst forth with his account of the blue satin bed and the monkeys, adding many harrowing details omitted by Angéline.

"And what does my uncle say?" he asked, gloomily.

"He says," replied Madame Bourcet, more

gloomily, "that Mademoiselle Chiaramonti's conduct is such as to drive any prudent man to distraction; and that if you marry her with even more than a hundred thousand francs' fortune, you will be doing a most imprudent thing."

Madame Bourcet paused for Louis to digest this. Then, she continued, after an impressive pause:

"And my brother also says, and desired me particularly to impress this upon you—that a *dot* of a hundred thousand francs is something enormous in our station of life; that he does not know of a single acquaintance of his own who has been so fortunate as to marry so much; and his own good fortune in marrying two hundred thousand francs is absolutely unprecedented. Moreover, through Mademoiselle Chiaramonti's connection with the Holy Father, your prospects, no doubt, would be splendidly advanced; and to throw away such a chance would be—a most imprudent thing."

So all the comfort poor Louis got was, that whatever he did, he would be doing a most imprudent thing. The knowledge of this made him a truly miserable man.

CHAPTER VIII

AN OLD LADY AND A LIMP

Nearly a week passed, with the utmost constraint upon the little family in the Rue de l'Echelle, except Fifi. Nothing could equal the airy *insouciance* of that young woman. She was no more the dumb, docile creature whose soul and spirit seemed frozen, whose will was benumbed, but Mademoiselle Fifi of the Imperial Theater. Fifi delighted in acting—and she was now acting in her own drama, and with the most exquisite enjoyment of the situation.

At intervals, during the week, Italians with monkeys appeared; but Angéline adopted with these gentry a simple, but effective, method of her own, which was secretly approved by Fifi. This was to appear suddenly on the scene with a kettle of boiling water, which she threatened to distribute impartially upon the monkeys and their owners. This never failed to stampede the enemy. Fifi scolded and complained bitterly of this, but Angéline took

a firm stand against monkeys and Italians—much to Fifi's relief.

The subject of Fifi's marriage to Louis was not touched upon by either Madame Bourcet or Louis in that week, although Louis continued to spend his evenings with his aunt and Fifi, and did not intermit the nightly game of cribbage. If it was imprudent to marry Fifi, it was likewise imprudent not to marry her—so reasoned the unhappy Louis, who, like Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, was of two minds at the same time, and fairly distracted between them.

But, if the Bourcets let the marriage question remain discreetly in the background, not so Fifi. Having discovered that Louis suffered acutely from her manifestations of affection, Fifi proceeded to subject him to a form of torture in high repute among the most bloodthirsty savages of North America. This consists in smearing the victim's body all over with honey, and then letting him be slowly stung to death by gnats and flies. Figuratively speaking, she smeared poor Louis with honey from his head to his heels, and then had a delicious joy in seeing him writhe under his agonies. And

the innocence and simplicity with which she did it fooled the unfortunate Louis completely.

One thing seemed clear to him: even if the Holy Father were willing to give up so desirable a husband for his young relative, Fifi, herself, would have to be reckoned with; and it all came, Louis thought, with a rainbow of vanity athwart the gloom, of his being so dreadfully handsome, fascinating and virtuous.

To Fifi this was the comedy part of the drama—and she played it for all there was in it.

She reckoned the shopping episode as the first act of the play. That was through, and there must be a second act. Fifi was too much of an artist to repeat herself. She felt she had reached the limit of horrors in shopping, and she still had nearly ninety thousand francs sewed up in her mattress. Some new way must be devised for getting rid of it. She thought of endowing beds in hospitals, of giving *dots* to young ladies, not so fortunate as herself in having a man like Cartouche, who declined a fortune—and a thousand other schemes; but all involved some vague and mysterious business transactions which frightened Fifi.

But, by a turn of fate, most unexpected, it was Cartouche who showed her a way out of her difficulties, and it filled her with delight. It was in a letter Cartouche wrote her in response to the two she had sent him, one after the other. Cartouche's letter was written in very black ink, in a large, slovenly hand, on a big sheet of paper, and Fifi knew perfectly well that he was in a rage when writing it.

"Fifi: What nonsense is this you write me, that as soon as you promised to marry Louis Bourcet you determined not to marry him? What have you been doing? Don't you know if you squander your money neither Louis Bourcet nor any man of his class will marry you? Four thousand francs for your trousseau is outrageous; as for the blue-satin bed the Empress could not buy, I can not trust myself to speak of it. If you continue acting in this way, I will not come to your wedding, nor let Toto come—that is, if Monsieur Bourcet or any other man will marry you. You seem to be bitten with the desire to do everything the Empress does, and a little more besides. You might follow the Empress' example, and going in your coach and six, with outriders, to the banking-house of Lafitte,

make a little gift of a hundred thousand francs to the fund for soldiers' orphans. Fifi, you are a goose, and there is no disguising it. I hope Monsieur Bourcet will use the strong hand on you, for your own good. Cartouche.

"P. S. I could tell you many interesting things about Toto, but I am so angry I can not write any more."

Fifi read this letter over, with a serene smile. Of course Cartouche was angry—but that was rather amusing.

She laid the letter down, and looked up at the patch of blue sky visible from her bedroom window. She seemed to see in that blue patch all her former life, so full of work, of makeshifts, of gaiety, of vivid interest—and compared with it the dull and spiritless existence before her—that is, which had lately been before her; because now the determination to return to the old life was as strong as the soul within her.

She took Cartouche's letter up and read it again, and a cry of joy came from her lips. Give the money to the soldiers' fund! She remembered having heard Madame Bourcet and Louis speaking of

this fund the night before. The Empress had gone in state, as Cartouche said, to make her splendid gift—and Lafitte's banking-house was not fifteen minutes from where she was in the Rue de l'Echelle.

In a flash, Fifi saw she could do it. She had her white wig and outside of her door was the press in which Angéline kept her best black bonnet, black shawl and gown, in which any woman could look a hundred years old. Oh, it was the simplest thing in the world! The next day was Thursday, the morning Madame Bourcet always went out, and Angéline always stayed at home. It could be done within twenty-four hours!

Fifi danced about her room in rapture. It was now late in the afternoon; she could scarcely wait until the next day. How precious was her white wig to her then!

"Cartouche said I was silly to bring all these things with me," she said to herself gleefully; "and I had to do it secretly—but see, how sensible I was! The fact is, I have a great deal of sense, and I know what is good for me, much better than Cartouche does, or the Bourcets, or the Emperor, or even the Holy Father. How do they

know what is going on inside of my head? Only I know perfectly well. And to think that Cartouche should have suggested such a good way for me to get rid of the hateful money! What an advertisement it will be! Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, granddaughter of the Pope's cousin, winner of the first prize in the grand lottery, and giving ninety thousand francs to the soldiers' orphans! Mademoiselle Mars, at the Théâtre Française, never had half such an advertisement. She has only her art to advertise her! I shall be worth fifty francs the week to any manager in Paris. No doubt the high-priced theaters will try to get me, and all the people who think they know, like the Emperor and the Holy Father, would say I should go to a theater on the other side of the river. But I do not understand the style of acting at the high-priced theaters. I should be hissed. No. The cheap theaters for me, and the kings and queens and Roman consuls and things like that. Oh, Fifi, what a clever, clever creature you are!"

The happier Fifi was the more she loved to torment Louis Bourcet, and she was so very demonstrative that night, and made so many allusions to the bliss she expected to enjoy with him, that both

Louis and Madame Bourcet were half distracted. But Fifi had such a lot of money—and was the granddaughter of the Holy Father's cousin!

Next morning, Madame Bourcet, as usual, made ready to go to the lecture, at twelve o'clock. Fifi had never once proposed going out alone, and was at that moment engaged in needlework in her own room. Madame Bourcet, therefore, started off, without any misgivings, except the general gloom produced by the thought of either having Fifi in the family, or not having her.

Scarcely had Madame Bourcet's respectable figure disappeared around the corner, before another figure equally respectable, and apparently a good deal older, emerged upon the street. It was Fifi, dressed in Angéline's clothes, and with a green barége veil falling over her face. She knew how to limp as if she were seventy-five, instead of nineteen, and cleverly concealed her mouthful of beautiful white teeth. On her arm was a little covered basket which might have held eggs, but which really held nearly ninety thousand francs in thousand-franc notes.

Fifi knew the way to the banking-house of La-

fitte perfectly well. It was then in a great gloomy building in the Rue St. Jacques. In less than fifteen minutes she was mounting the steps, and soon found herself in a large room, around which was an iron grating, and behind this grating were innumerable clerks at work.

Fifi went to the window nearest the door, and asked of a very alert-looking young clerk, at work at the desk:

"Will you be kind enough, Monsieur, to tell me where I can make a contribution to the fund for the soldiers' orphans?"

"Here, Madame," replied the young clerk, eying superciliously the little basket Fifi laid down on the ledge before him. People made all sorts of contributions to this fund, and the spruce young clerk had several times had his sensibilities outraged by offerings of old shoes, of assignats, even of a live cock. The basket before him looked as if it held a cat—probably one of the rare kind, which the old lady would propose that he should sell, and give the proceeds to the fund. Out of the basket the white-haired old lady with the green barége veil took a parcel, and laying it down, said humbly:

"Monsieur, this gift comes from one who has no husband and no son to give to the empire."

"To whom shall I make out the receipt, and for how much, Madame?" asked the clerk; but the old lady was already out of the room, and going down the steps much faster than one would expect a person of her age to be able to do.

Once outside Fifi stepped into a dark archway, from which she emerged, a minute later, wearing her own bonnet and red cloak and her own skirt. All of Angéline's paraphernalia, together with the white wig, was squeezed into a bundle which Fifi cleverly concealed under her cloak. The basket she had tossed down an open cellar under the archway.

She called a closed cab, and stuffing her bundle under the seat, ordered the cabman to drive her in a direction which she knew would take her past the bank. She had the exquisite pleasure of seeing half a dozen clerks rush distractedly out, inquiring frantically if any one had seen in the neighborhood an old lady with a limp, a green veil and a basket. Fifi stopped her cab long enough to get a description of herself from one of the wildest-looking of the clerks.

"But why, Monsieur, do you wish to find this old lady?" Fifi asked.

"Because, Mademoiselle, she has stolen ninety thousand francs from this bank a moment ago or given ninety thousand francs to something or other," cried the clerk, who had entirely confounded the story of Fifi's adventure, which had been imparted to him in haste and confusion.

Fifi, nearly dying with laughter, rolled away in her cab. The last glimpse she had of her late friend, the bank clerk, he had found the basket in the archway, and was declaiming with disheveled hair and wild gesticulations concerning the robbery, or the gift, he did not know which.

Fifi was not away from home more than half an hour, and when Angéline, about one o'clock, passed through the snuff-colored drawing-room, she saw Fifi, through the open door, sitting at the writing-table in her bedroom, and scribbling away for dear life. This is what she wrote:

"Cartouche: I have got your letter and I have followed your advice—I will not say exactly how—but you will shortly see me, I think, in the dear old street of the Black Cat. Fifi."

Madame Bourcet returned punctually at two o'clock, and as the weather had become bad, she and Fifi spent the afternoon together in the snuff-colored drawing-room.

When eight o'clock in the evening arrived, Louis Bourcet, as usual, appeared. He had news to communicate, and gave a fearful and wonderful account of the proceedings at the banking-house, in which it was represented that a mysterious old lady, with a basket and a limp, had appeared, and had either stolen ninety thousand francs, or given ninety thousand francs to the fund for the soldiers' orphans, nobody outside of the bank knew exactly which. The excitement in the neighborhood of the bank had been tremendous, and such a crowd had collected that the *gens d'armes* had been compelled to charge in order to clear the street. The basket had been found, but the limp, along with the old lady, had vanished.

All sorts of stories were flying about concerning the affair, some people declaring that the troops from the nearest barracks had been ordered out, a cordon placed around the banking-house, and the mysterious old lady was nothing less than a determined ruffian, who had disguised himself as an old

woman, and was the leader of a gang of desperate robbers, determined on looting the bank. Louis Bourcet held firmly to this opinion.

"It is my belief," he said solemnly, "that it was a scheme which involved not only robbery, but possibly assassination. The old woman was no old woman, but a reckless criminal, who, by a clever disguise, got into the bank, and was only prevented from carrying out some dreadful design by the coolness and decision of the bank employees. The basket, which is marked with the initials A. D., is held at the bureau of the *arrondissement*, and at the investigation to-morrow morning—mark my words, that basket will be the means of disclosing a terrible plot against the banking-house of Lafitte."

Madame Bourcet listened to these words of wisdom with the profoundest respect—but Fifi uttered a convulsive sound which she smothered in her handkerchief and which, she explained, was caused by her agitation at the sensational story she had just heard.

Louis was so flattered by the tribute of attention to his powers of seeing farther into a millstone than any one else, that he harangued

the whole evening upon this violent attempt on Lafitte's banking-house in particular and the dangers of robbery in general. He even forgot the game of cribbage. When he rose to go, at ten o'clock, both Madame Bourcet and Fifi protested that they expected to be murdered in their beds by a gang of robbers before daylight. Louis promised to come to the *déjeuner* at eleven the next morning, to give them the latest particulars of this nefarious attempt to rob the bank.

Fifi alone in her own room went into spasms of delight. Her freedom was close at hand—and soon, soon, she could return to that happy life of hard work and deep affection she had once known. When she slipped into bed, the hard lump was not in her mattress.

"Think," she said to herself, lying awake in the dark, "of the good that hateful money will do now —of the poor children warmed and fed and clothed. Giving it away like this is not half so difficult as spending it on hats and gowns and monkeys, and I think I may reckon on getting back to the dear street of the Black Cat soon—very soon."

And so, she fell into a deep, sweet sleep, to dream of Cartouche, and Toto and all the people

at the Imperial Theater, including Julie Campionet.

Next morning, Fifi awaited the *déjeuner* with feelings of entrancing pleasure. She loved to see Louis Bourcet make a fool of himself, and longed to make a fool of him—this naughty Fifi.

She was gratified, for at eleven o'clock, Louis appeared, looking, for once, a little sheepish. The desperate robbery had been no robbery at all, but a gift of ninety thousand francs to the fund for the soldiers' orphans. Louis had bought several newspapers, and each contained the official announcement of the banking-house of Lafitte, with a request that the generous donor come forward and discover her identity.

Louis Bourcet, like a good many other people, could always construct a new hypothesis to meet any new development in a case. He at once declared that the donor must be a conscience-stricken woman, who had at some time committed a crime and wished to atone for it. He harped on this theme while Fifi was soberly drinking her chocolate and inwardly quivering with delight. She waited until one of Louis's long-winded periods came to an end, when, the spirit of the actress

within her, and the piercing joy of making Louis Bourcet look like a guy, were too much for her. Putting down her cup, therefore, and looking about her in a way to command attention, Fifi said, in a soft, low voice:

"Madame Bourcet—and dear Louis—" here Louis shuddered—"I have something to say to you, concerning that mysterious old woman with the limp and the basket. First, let me say, that until yesterday, I kept my fortune of nearly ninety thousand francs in my mattress, and my old shoes I kept in the bank. For people are always losing their money in banks, but I never heard of any one losing a franc that was sewed up in a mattress."

There was a pause. Louis Bourcet sat as if turned to stone, with his chocolate raised to his lips, and his mouth wide open to receive it, but he seemed to lose the power of moving his hand or shutting his mouth. Madame Bourcet appeared to be paralyzed where she sat.

"Yes," said Fifi, who felt as if she were once more on the beloved boards of the Imperial Theater. "I kept my money where I knew it would be safe. And then, seeing I had totally failed to captivate the affections of my fiancé, I determined to

perform an act of splendid generosity, that would compel his admiration, and possibly, his tenderness. So, yesterday, when you, Madame, were out, I dressed myself up in Angéline's Sunday clothes, took her small fruit basket, and putting all my fortune in the basket, went to the bank, and handed it all over, in notes of the Bank of France, to the fund for soldiers' orphans."

There was not a sound, except Madame Bourcet's gasping for breath. Louis Bourcet had turned of a sickly pallor, his mouth remaining wide open, and his cup still suspended. This lasted for a full minute, when the door suddenly opened, and Angéline appeared from the kitchen.

"Madame," she cried excitedly, "there have been thieves here as well as at the bank. My fruit basket is gone—I can swear I saw it yesterday morning. It is marked with my initials, A. D., and I trust, by the blessing of God, the thief will be found and sent to the galleys for life."

At this apparently trivial catastrophe, Madame Bourcet uttered a loud shriek; Louis Bourcet dropped his cup, which crashed upon the table, smashing the water carafe; Angéline, amazed at the result of her simple remark, ran wildly about

the room shrieking, "Thieves! thieves! Send for the police!" Madame Bourcet continued to emit screams at short intervals, while Louis Bourcet, his head in his hands, groaned in anguish.

Fifi, alone, sat serene and smiling, and as soon as she could make herself heard, cried to Louis:

"Dear Louis, tell me, I beg of you, if you approve of my course?"

"No!" bawled Louis, for once forgetting to be correct in manner and deportment. Then, rising to his feet, and staggering to the door, he said in a sepulchral voice: "Everything is over between us. If the Holy Father takes measures to make me fulfil my compact to marry you, I shall leave France—I shall flee my country. Mademoiselle, permit me to say you are an impossible person. Adieu forever, I hope!" With this he was gone.

Madame Bourcet at this recovered enough to scream to Angéline, in a rapid crescendo:

"Get a van—*get a van*—GET A VAN!"

Fifi knew perfectly well what that meant, and was in ecstasies. She flew to her room, huddled her belongings together, saying to herself:

"Cartouche, I shall see you! And, Cartouche, I

love you! And, Cartouche, I shall make you marry me—me, your own Fifi!"

In a little while the van was at the door and Fifi's boxes were piled in. She threw to Angéline the odious brown gown, with the green spots, and a ten-franc piece besides—which somewhat mollified Angéline, without changing her opinion that Fifi was a dangerous and explosive person to have about. She promised to send for the blue satin bed. Then Fifi, reverting to her old natural self, climbed into the van along with her boxes, and jolted off, in the direction of the street of the Black Cat, and was happier than she had yet been since she had left it.

CHAPTER IX

BACK TO THE BLACK CAT

About three o'clock in the afternoon, the van, containing Fifi and her wardrobe, drew up before the tall old house in the street of the Black Cat where she had lived ever since she was a little, black-eyed child, who still cried for her mother, and who would not be comforted except upon Cartouche's knee. How familiar, how actual, how delightfully redolent of home was the narrow little street! Fifi saw it in her mind's eye long before she reached it, and in her gladness of heart sang snatches of songs like the one Toto thought was made for him, *Le petit mousse noir*. As the van clattered into the street, Fifi, sitting on her boxes, craned her neck out to watch a certain garret window, and from thence she heard two short, rapturous barks. It was Toto. Fifi, jumping down, opened the house door, and ran headlong up the dark, narrow well-known stair. Half way up, she met Toto, jumping down the steps two at a time.

Fifi caught him to her heart, and wept plentifully, tears of joy.

But there was some one else to see—and that was Cartouche, who was always in his room at that hour.

"Now, Toto," said Fifi, as she slipped softly up the stairs, still squeezing him, "I am about to make a formal offer of my hand to Cartouche; and mind, you are not to interrupt me with barking and whining and scratching. It is very awkward to be interrupted on such occasions, and you must behave yourself suitably to the situation."

"Yap!" assented Toto.

The door to Cartouche's room was a half-door, the upper part of glass. This upper half-door was a little ajar, and Fifi caught sight of Cartouche. He was sitting on his poor bed, with a large piece of tin before him, which he was transforming into a medieval shield. He was hard at work—for who ever saw Cartouche idle? But once or twice he stopped, and picked up something lying on the table before him, and looked at it. Fifi recognized it at once. It was a little picture of herself, taken long ago, when she used to sit on Cartouche's knee and beg him to tell her stories.

Fifi felt a lump in her throat, and called out softly and tremulously:

"Cartouche! I am here. It is Fifi."

Cartouche dropped his tools as if lightning-struck, and turned toward the door—and there was Fifi's smiling face peering at him.

He went straight to the door and opened the upper part wide. Fifi saw that he was quite pale, though his dark and expressive eyes were burning, and it was plain to her that he was consumed with love and longing for her—but he was almost cross when he spoke.

"What brings you here, Fifi?" he asked.

"Everything that is good. First, Louis Bourcet has jilted me—" and Fifi capered gleefully with Toto in her arms.

"Is that anything to be merry about?" inquired Cartouche, sternly; but Fifi saw that his strong brown hand trembled as it lay on the sill of the half-door.

"Indeed it is—if you knew Louis Bourcet—and he did it because of my nobility of soul."

"Humph," said Cartouche.

"It was in this manner. You remember, Cartouche, the letter you wrote me three days ago, in

which you advised me to give all my fortune to the fund for soldiers' orphans?"

"No," tartly answered Cartouche. "I never wrote you any such letter."

"Listen," said Fifi, sweetly, and taking from her pocket Cartouche's letter, she read aloud:

" 'You might follow the Empress' example, and going in your coach and six, with outriders, to the banking-house of Lafitte, make a little gift of a hundred thousand francs to the fund for the soldiers' orphans.'

"I did not have a coach and six, with outriders, nor even a hundred thousand francs to give," continued Fifi, putting the letter, for future reference, in her pocket, "as I had spent almost ten thousand on clothes and monkeys and beds. And I also saved enough to buy some gowns that will put Julie Campionet's nose out of joint—but I had nearly ninety thousand francs to give—and I dressed myself up as an old woman—"

"It was all over Paris this morning," cried Cartouche, striking his forehead, "I read it myself in the newspaper! Oh, Fifi, Fifi, what madness!" and Cartouche walked wildly about the room.

"Madness, do you call it?" replied Fifi, with

spirit. "This comes of taking your advice. I had meant to spend the money on any foolish thing I could find to buy that was worth nothing, and never could be worth anything; and when your letter came, I thought, 'here is a sensible way to spend it'—for I was obliged to get rid of it. I never had a happy moment since I had the money —and I must say, Cartouche, I think you behaved very badly to me, in never making me the slightest apology for giving me the ticket that drew the money, even after you saw it made me miserable."

Here Fifi assumed an offended air, to which Cartouche, walking about distractedly, paid no attention whatever, only crying out at intervals:

"Oh, Fifi, what makes you behave so! What will you do now?"

Fifi drew off, now genuinely contemptuous and indignant.

"Do?" she asked in a tone of icy contempt. "Do you think that an actress who has given away her whole fortune of ninety thousand francs and whose grandfather was cousin to the Pope will want an engagement?"

"But the newspapers don't know who gave the money," said Cartouche, weakly. "All of them

this morning said that—and the Emperor has had published in the *Moniteur* an official request that the giver will make herself known, so that she may receive the thanks in person of himself and the Empress."

"Better and better," cried Fifi. "Ten francs the week more will Duvernet have to pay me for receiving the thanks of the Emperor and Empress." And then with an access of hauteur she added: "You must know very little of the theatrical profession, Cartouche, if you suppose I intend to let the newspapers remain in ignorance of who gave the money. Cartouche, in some respects, you know about as little concerning our profession as the next one. You never had the least idea of the value of advertising."

"Perhaps not," replied Cartouche, stung by her tone, "all I know is, the value of hard work. And now, I suppose, having thrown away the chance of marrying a worthy man in a respectable walk of life, you will proceed to marry some showy creature for his fine clothes, or his long pedigree, and then be miserable forever after."

"Oh, no," answered Fifi, sweetly. "The man I intend to marry is not at all showy. He is as plain

as the kitchen knife—and as for fine clothes and a long pedigree, ha! ha!" Fifi pinched Toto, who seemed to laugh with her.

Cartouche remained silent a whole minute, and then said calmly:

"You seem to have fixed upon the man."

"Yes, Toto and I have agreed upon a suitable match for me. Haven't we, Toto?"

"Yap, yap, yap!" barked Toto.

"Have you consulted any one about this?" asked Cartouche in a low voice, after a moment.

"No one but Toto," replied Fifi, pinching Toto's ear.

Cartouche raised his arms in despair. He could only groan:

"Oh, Fifi! Oh, Fifi!"

"Don't 'Oh Fifi' me any more, Cartouche, after your behavior to me," cried Fifi indignantly, "and after I have taken your advice and given the money away, and Louis Bourcet has jilted me—as he did as soon as he found I had no fortune—"

"Didn't I tell you he would?"

"I didn't need anybody to tell me that. Louis Bourcet is one of the virtuous who make one sick

of virtue. But at least after you made him jilt me—"

"*I* made him jilt you!"

"Certainly you did. How many times shall I have to prove to you that it was you who put it into my head to give the money away? And now, I want to ask, having caused me to lose the chance of marrying the most correct young man in Paris, you—you—ought to marry me yourself!"

Fifi said this last in a very low, sweet voice, her cheek resting upon Toto's sleek, black head, her elbow on the sill of the half-door. Cartouche walked quite to the other end of the room and stood with his back to Fifi, and said not one word.

Fifi waited a minute or two, Cartouche maintaining his strange silence. Then, Fifi, glancing down, saw on a little table within the room, and close to the half-door, a stick of chalk. With that she wrote in large white letters on Toto's black back:

Cartouche, I love you—

and tossed Toto into the room. He trotted up to Cartouche and lay down at his feet.

Fifi saw Cartouche give a great start when he

picked up the dog, and Toto uttered a little pleading whine which was quite human in its entreaty. Being a very astute dog, he knew that Cartouche was not treating Fifi right, and so, pleaded for her.

Fifi, calmly watching Cartouche, saw that he was deeply agitated, and she was not in the least disturbed by it. Presently, dropping Toto, Cartouche strode toward the half-door, over which Fifi leaned.

"Fifi," he cried, in a voice of agony, "why do you torture me so? You know that I love you; and you know that I ought not to let you marry me—me, almost old enough to be your father, poor, obscure, half crippled, Fifi. I shall never forget the anguish of the first day I knew that I loved you; it was the day I found you acting with the players in the street. You were but sixteen, and I had loved you until then as a child, as a little sister—and suddenly, I was overwhelmed with a lover's love for you. But I swore to myself, on my honor, never to let you know it—never to speak a word of love to you—"

The strong man trembled, and fell, rather than sat upon a chair. Fifi, trembling a little herself, but still smiling, answered:

"And you have kept your vow. I remember that day well—it was the first time you ever spoke an angry word to me. You have spoken many since, you hard-hearted Cartouche."

To this Cartouche made no answer but to bury his face in his lean, brown hands, that bore the marks of honest toil. Fifi continued briskly:

"Cartouche, open this lower door. It is fast."

Cartouche only shook his head.

Then Fifi, glancing about, saw a rickety old chair at the head of the stairs, and noiselessly fetching it, she put it against the door, stepped up on it; a second step on the little table by the door, and a third step on the floor, brought her in the room, and close to Cartouche. She laid one hand upon his shoulder—with the other she picked up Toto—and said, in a wheedling voice:

"Cartouche, shall we be married this day fortnight?"

Cartouche made a faint effort to push her away, but the passion in him rose up lion-like, and mastered him. He seized Fifi in his strong arms and devoured her rosy lips with kisses. Then, dropping her as suddenly, he cried wildly:

"No, no! It is not right, Fifi—I can not do you so cruel a wrong!"

"You are almost as bad as Louis Bourcet," remarked Fifi, straightening her curly hair, which was all over her face. "Nevertheless, I shall marry you this day fortnight."

For answer, Cartouche vaulted over the half-door, in spite of his bad leg, and was gone clattering down the stairs. Fifi listened as the sound died away, and then ran to the window to see him go out of the house and walk off, as fast as he could, down the street of the Black Cat.

"Toto," said Fifi to her friend, taking him up in her arms: "We—you and I—are not good enough for Cartouche, but all the same, we mean to have him. I can not live without him—that is, I will not, which comes to the same thing—and all the other men I have ever known seem small and mean alongside of Cartouche—" which showed that Fifi, as she claimed, really had some sense.

As for Cartouche, he walked along through the narrow streets into the crowded thoroughfare, full of shadows even then, although it was still early in the soft, spring afternoon. He neither knew nor

cared where he was going except that he must fly from Fifi's witching eyes and tender words and sweet caresses. His heart was pounding so that he could fancy others heard it besides himself. This marriage was clearly impossible—it was not to be thought of. Fifi, in spite of her rashness and throwing away of her fortune, was no fool. She had not, as Cartouche feared, assumed a style of living that would have made a hundred thousand francs a mere bagatelle. What she had squandered, she had squandered deliberately for a purpose; what she had given had been given to a good cause, for Fifi, of all women, best knew her own mind. And to think that she should have taken up this strange notion to marry him—after she had seen something so far superior—so Cartouche thought. And what was to be done? If necessary, he would leave the Imperial Theater, and go far, far away; but what then would become of Fifi, alone and unprotected, rash and young and beautiful?

Turning these things over tumultuously in his mind, Cartouche found himself in front of the shop where he had bought Fifi the red cloak. There

was a mirror in the window, and Cartouche stood and looked at himself in it. The mirror stiffened his resolution.

"No," he said. "Fifi must not throw herself away on such a looking fellow. I love her—I love her too well for that."

A church clock chimed six. Cartouche came out of his troubled day-dream with a start—he was already due at the theater. He ran as fast as his bad leg would allow him, and for the first time in the eight years he had been employed there, was late.

Duvernet, the manager, was walking the floor of his dingy little office and tearing his hair. He was dressed for the part of the Cid Campeador in the drama of the evening. Duvernet never made the mistake of acting a trivial part. He clattered about in a full suit of tin armor, but had inadvertently clapped his hat on his head. Although there was but little time to spare, the manager was obliged to pour out his woes to Cartouche.

"Julie Campionet saw Fifi return, with all her boxes," he groaned; "and—well, you know Julie Campionet—I have had the devil's own time the whole afternoon. Then Fifi marched herself over

here—the minx. I called her Fifi, at first. She drew herself up like an offended empress and said, 'Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, if you please.' She then informed me, with an air of grand condescension that she might return here as leading lady, and told me, quite negligently, that she was the person who gave the ninety thousand francs to the soldiers' orphans' fund. You would have thought she was in the habit of giving ninety thousand francs to charity every morning before breakfast. She swore she did not intend to acknowledge it until she had got a place as leading lady at a theater that suited her; likewise that she proposed to be billed as Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, cousin to the Holy Father, and to have the story of her relationship to the Pope published in every newspaper in Paris, and demanded fifty francs the week. The advertising alone is worth a hundred francs the week; but you know, Cartouche, no woman on earth could stand a hundred francs the week and keep sane. Then, she tells me that she has a magnificent wardrobe—she wore that brooch in here, which I have never been able to satisfy myself is real or not—and took such a high tone altogether that I began to ask myself if I were the manager of this theater

or was Fifi. And then the last information she gave me was that she was to marry you this day fortnight—"

"Ah!" cried Cartouche, gloomily.

"And said if I didn't give her back her old place as leading lady that I would have to part with you. I said something about Julie Campionet, and being my wife, and so on, and then Fifi flew into a royal rage, saying she would settle with Julie Campionet herself. Then Julie came rushing into the room, and she and Fifi had it out in great style. You never heard such a noise in your life—it was like killing pigs, and Julie fell in my arms and screamed to me to protect her, and Fifi started that infernal dog of hers to barking, and there was a devil of a row, and how it ended I don't know, except that both of them are vowing vengeance on me. But one thing is sure—I can't let a chance go of securing the Pope's cousin, who won the first prize in the lottery and gave away ninety thousand francs. And then—what Julie—"

The manager groaned and buried his head in his hands. Like the unfortunate Louis Bourcet, all he could make out was, that whatever he did would be highly imprudent.

It was already late, and there was not another moment to lose, so Cartouche had to run away and leave the manager to his misery.

The performance was hardly up to the mark that night. Sensational tales of Fifi's return had flown like wildfire about the theater. She was commonly reported to have come back in a coach and pair, with a van full of huge boxes, all crammed with the most superb costumes. Such stories were naturally disquieting to Julie Campionet, and together with her scene in the afternoon, impaired her performance visibly.

As for Fifi, she was at that moment established in her old room, which luckily was vacant, and was cooking a pair of pork chops over a charcoal stove —and was perfectly happy. So was Toto, who barked vociferously, and had to be held in Fifi's arms, to keep his paws off the red-hot stove. There was a bottle of wine, some sausages, and onions and cheese, and a box of highly colored bonbons, for which Fifi had rashly expended three francs. But it is not every day, thought Fifi, that one comes home to one's best beloved—and so she made a little feast for Cartouche and herself.

Cartouche was late that night, and trying to

avoid Fifi, he mounted softly to his garret. As he approached Fifi's door, he saw the light through a chink. Fifi heard his step, quiet as it was, and opening the door wide, cried out gaily:

"Here is supper ready for you, Cartouche, and Toto and I waiting for you."

Cartouche could not resist. He had meant to —but after all, he was but human—and Fifi was so sweet—so sweet to him. He came in, therefore, awkwardly enough, and feeling like a villain the while, he sat down at the rickety little table, on which Fifi had spread a feast, seasoned with love.

"Cartouche," she said presently, when they were eating and drinking, "you must get a holiday for this day fortnight."

"What for?" asked Cartouche, gnawing his chop—Fifi cooked chops beautifully.

"Because that is the day we are to be married," briskly responded Fifi.

Cartouche put down his chop.

"Fifi," he said. "You will break my heart. Why will you persist in throwing yourself away on me?"

"Dear me!" cried Fifi to Toto, "how very silly Cartouche is to-night! And what a horrid fiancé he makes—worse than Louis Bourcet."

Then Fifi told him about some of the tricks she had played on poor Louis, and Cartouche was obliged to laugh.

"At least, Fifi," he said, "you shan't marry me, until you have consulted his Holiness."

"And his Majesty," replied Fifi gravely. "Who would think, to see us supping on pork chops and onions, that our marriage concerned such very great people!"

Cartouche went to his garret presently, still drowned in perplexities, but with a wild feeling of rapture that seemed to make a new heaven and a new earth for him.

Fifi, next morning, proceeded to lay out her plans. She did not go near the theater until the afternoon. Then she put on her yellow and purple brocade, her large red and green satin cloak, her huge hat and feathers and reinforced with the alleged diamond brooch, and sending out for a cab, ordered it to carry her and her magnificence across the street to the manager's private office.

Duvernet, thinking Fifi had come to her senses, and would ask, instead of demanding, her place back, received her coolly. Fifi was charmingly affable.

"I only called to ask, Monsieur," she said, "if you could tell me how to catch the diligence which goes out to Fontainebleau. I wish to go out to see his Holiness, who, as you know, is my relative, and as such, I desire his formal consent to my marriage to Cartouche."

Fifi was careful not to say that she was the Pope's relative; the Pope was *her* relative.

Duvernet, somewhat disconcerted by Fifi's superb air, replied that the diligence passed the corner, two streets below, at nine in the morning, and one in the afternoon.

"Thank you," responded Fifi. "I shall go out, to-morrow, at one o'clock. I could not think of getting up at the unearthly hour necessary to take the morning diligence. And can you tell me, Monsieur, about the omnibus that passes the Tuileries? The Emperor has had a request printed in the *Moniteur*, asking that the lady who made the gift of ninety thousand francs to the soldiers' orphans should declare herself—and I have no objection to going in the omnibus as far as the gates of the Tuileries. Then, I shall get a carriage."

Duvernet was so thunderstruck at Fifi's grandeur, that he mumbled something quite unintelligi-

ble about the omnibus. Fifi, however, was perfectly well acquainted with the ways both of the omnibus and diligence, and only inquired about them to impress upon Duvernet the immense gulf between the Fifi of yesterday and the Mademoiselle Chiaramonti of to-day. She finally rose and sailed off, but returned to ask the amazed and disgusted Duvernet to get her a cab to take her across the street.

"I can walk, Monsieur," she said condescendingly, "except that I am afraid of ruining my clothes. I carry on my back nearly four thousand francs' worth of clothes."

Duvernet, still staggered by her splendors, had to search the neighborhood for a cab—cabs were not much in demand in that quarter. But at last he found one, which transported Fifi and her grandeur across the way. It was clearly impossible that so much elegance should go on foot.

That night, again, she made a little supper for Cartouche, and Cartouche, feeling himself a guilty wretch, again went in and ate it, and basked in the sunlight of Fifi's eyes.

CHAPTER X

THE POPE WINS

Now, Fifi really intended to go out to Fontainebleau the next day to see the Holy Father, for, although she cared little for the opinion of the world in general, she had been deeply impressed by the benignant old man, and she secretly yearned for his approval. And besides, she had an instinctive feeling that the Holy Father would understand better than any one else in the world why she wished to marry Cartouche. That tender, serene soul of the old man, who cherished the affections of his youth and who had sounded the depths and measured the heights of human grandeur and yet esteemed love the greatest thing in the world, would understand a simple, loving heart like Fifi's. It had been so easy to tell him all about Cartouche and herself—and he had comprehended it so readily; just the same, thought Fifi, as if he himself had lived and worked and struggled as she and Cartouche had lived and worked and struggled.

Fifi knew, in her own way, that there is a kinship among all honest souls—and that thus the Holy Father was near of kin to Cartouche.

Fifi did not mention this proposed expedition to Cartouche, because, in her lexicon, it was always easier to justify a thing after it is done than before.

So, when on the morning after her return, the diligence rumbled past the street below that of the Black Cat, Fifi was inside the diligence—and, on the outside, quite unknown to her, was Duvernet.

The manager, it may be imagined, had not had a very easy time of it, either as a manager or a husband for the last twenty-four hours. Julie Campionet had large lung power, and had used it cruelly on him. Nevertheless, the idea of securing Fifi with all her additional values for the Imperial Theater was quite irresistible to Duvernet; and the thought that another manager, more enterprising than he, might get her for ten francs more the week, was intolerable to him. He determined to make a gigantic effort for Fifi's services, and it would be extremely desirable to him to have this crucial interview as far away from the Imperial Theater as possible.

Therefore, Duvernet was on the lookout when

the diligence jolted past, and when he saw a demure figure in black, with a veil over her face, get inside the diligence, he recognized Fifi, and jumped up on the outside.

Fifi, sitting within, had no notion that Duvernet was on the same vehicle. She kept her veil down and behaved with the greatest propriety. She knew better than to wear any of her ridiculous finery in the presence of the Holy Father, and as she had got rid of the brown gown with the green spots, she wore a plain black gown and mantle which became her well, and she scarcely seemed like the same creature who had worn the yellow brocade robe and the striped satin cloak.

The diligence rumbled along, through the pleasant spring afternoon, upon the sunny road to Fontainebleau, and reached it in a couple of hours.

When Fifi dismounted, at the street leading to the palace, what was her surprise to find that Duvernet dismounted too!

"I had business at Fontainebleau, and so was fortunate to find myself on the top of the diligence, while you were inside," was Duvernet's ready explanation of his presence.

Fifi was at heart glad of his protection, and

hoped he would return to Paris with her, but would by no means admit so much to him.

"I," said Fifi, with dignity, "also have business at Fontainebleau—with the Holy Father. You may walk with me to the palace."

"Thank you, Mademoiselle," answered Duvernet, bowing; and Fifi could not tell whether he was laughing at her or not.

As they walked toward the vast old palace, gray and peaceful in the golden sun of springtime, Duvernet said:

"Well, Fi—"

"What?" asked Fifi coldly.

"Mademoiselle, I should say. Since we find ourselves together, we may as well resume our business conversation of yesterday afternoon. If you will take fifty francs the week, your old place at the Imperial Theater is open to you."

"And that minx, Julie Campionet—oh, I beg your pardon."

"Don't mention it," gloomily replied Julie Campionet's husband. "She has told me twenty times since yesterday that she means to get a divorce, just like the others. If she doesn't, I can, perhaps, get her to take her old parts by giving her an

additional five francs the week—for I assure you, when it comes to a question of salary, she is not Madame Duvernet, but Julie Campionet."

"It would be against my conscience, Monsieur, to interfere with your domestic peace—" said Fifi demurely, and that time it was Duvernet who didn't know whether or not Fifi was laughing at him.

"Mademoiselle," replied he, with his loftiest air, "do you suppose I would let my domestic peace stand before Art? No. A thousand times no! Art is always first with me, and last. And besides, if Julie Campionet should get a divorce from me—well, I have never found any trouble yet in getting married. All the trouble came afterward."

"Fifty francs," mused Fifi; "and if I allow you to bill me as Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, and the granddaughter of the Pope's cousin, that would be worth at least twenty-five francs the week more. Seventy-five francs the week."

"Good heavens, no!" shouted Duvernet. "The Holy Father himself wouldn't be worth seventy-five francs at the Imperial Theater! Sixty francs, at the outside, and Julie Campionet to think it is fifty."

"I had better wait until I am married to Cartouche," replied Fifi innocently.

But waiting was just what the manager did not want. So, still urging her to take sixty francs, they reached the palace.

Fifi had a little note prepared and gave it, together with a pink gilt-bordered card, inscribed "Mademoiselle Josephine Chiaramonti," to the porter at the door. The porter evidently regarded Fifi, and her note and card included, with the utmost disfavor, but, like most underlings, he was well acquainted with his master's private affairs, and knew in a minute who Fifi was, and so, grudgingly went off with her letter and card.

Fifi and Duvernet kept up their argument in the great, gloomy anteroom into which they were ushered. Fifi was saying:

"And if I allow you to bill me as his Holiness' cousin, and you give me seventy-five francs—"

"Sixty, Mademoiselle."

"Seventy-five francs, will you promise always to take my part when I quarrel with Julie Campionet?"

"Good God! What a proposition! I am married to Julie Campionet!"

"Have you really and actually straightened out your divorces from your other three wives?" asked Fifi maliciously.

"N-n-not exactly. To tell you the truth, Fi—I mean, Mademoiselle—I get those divorce suits and those leading ladies so mixed up in my head, that I am not quite sure about anything concerning them. But if you doubt that I am married to Julie Campionet, just listen to her when she is giving me a wigging, and you will be convinced."

"Of course," continued Fifi, dismissing Duvernet and Julie Campionet and their matrimonial complications with a wave of the hand, "it is not really necessary for me to act at all. I have a fortune in my diamond brooch, any time I choose to sell it. I gave away ninety thousand francs—but in my brooch I hold on to enough to keep the wolf from the door." Then, a dazzling *coup* coming into her head, she remarked casually, "I hope Cartouche is not marrying me for my diamond brooch."

Duvernet, a good deal exasperated by Fifi's airs, replied, with a grin:

"Cartouche tells me he isn't going to marry you at all."

"We will see about that," said Fifi, using the

same enigmatic words Cartouche had used, when the matrimonial proposition was first offered for his consideration.

After a long wait the porter returned, accompanied by the same sour-looking ecclesiastic whom Fifi had met on her previous visit; and he escorted her to the door of the Pope's chamber.

The door was opened for her, and Fifi found herself once more in the presence of the Pope. She ran forward and kissed his hand, and the Holy Father patted her hand kindly.

"Well, my child," he said, "I hear strange things of you. The Bourcets conveyed to me early this morning that you have left their house, given up the marriage with the respectable young advocate, Louis Bourcet, and bestowed all your fortune on charity. I have been anxious about you."

"Pray don't be so any more, Holy Father," said Fifi, smiling brightly and seating herself on a little chair the Holy Father motioned her to take. "I never was so happy in my life as I am now. I hated the idea of marrying Louis Bourcet."

"Then you should not have agreed to marry him."

"Oh, Holy Father, you can't imagine how it

dazes one to be suddenly overwhelmed with riches, to be taken away from all one knows and loves, to be compelled to be idle when one would work—to be, in short, transplanted to another world. At first, I would have agreed to anything."

"I understand. Now, open your heart to me as to your father."

"I was very wretched after I got the money. I was idle, I was unhappy, I was unloved—and I had been used to being busy, to being happy, to being loved. And what gave me the courage to rebel was, that I found out I loved Cartouche. Holy Father, he is my only friend—" An expression in the Holy Father's eyes made Fifi quickly correct herself. "*Was* my only friend. And when I thought of being married, I could not imagine life without Cartouche. So, I made up my mind to marry him. But Cartouche said he was neither young nor rich, nor handsome, and with my youth and newly-acquired fortune, I ought to marry above him. I do not claim that Cartouche is what is called—a—" Fifi hesitated, the term "brilliant marriage" not being known in the street of the Black Cat. But the Holy Father suggested it with a smile—

"A brilliant marriage?"

"Yes, Holy Father, that is what I mean. But he is the best of men; I shiver when I think what would have become of me without Cartouche. And he is as brave as a lion—he was the first man across at the bridge of Lodi—and the Emperor was the second. And he serves Duvernet, the manager, just as faithfully as he served his country. Cartouche has charge of all sorts of things at the theater, and he would die rather than let any one swindle the manager."

"I should like to have him for my majordomo," said the Holy Father.

"He is not much of an actor though, to say nothing of his stiff leg. Cartouche is an angel, Holy Father, but he can not act. So he does not get much salary—only twenty-five francs the week. However, I know two things: that Cartouche is the best of men, and that I love him with all my heart. Holy Father, was not that reason enough for not marrying Louis Bourcet?"

"Quite reason enough," softly answered the Holy Father.

"After all, though, it was Louis Bourcet who got rid of me. It was like this, Holy Father. I knew as long as I had a hundred thousand francs

that Louis Bourcet would marry me, no matter how outlandish my behavior was; and I also knew, as long as I had a hundred thousand francs, Cartouche never would marry me. And as I wanted to be happy, I concluded to get rid of my hundred thousand francs, and that horrid, pious, correct, stupid, pompous Louis Bourcet at the same time—"

And then Fifi burst into the whole story of her adventures, beginning with her putting the box of old shoes in the bank, and sewing her money up in the mattress. Through it all the Holy Father sat with his hand to his lips and coughed occasionally.

Fifi knew how to tell her story, and gave very graphic pictures of her life and adventures in the Rue de l'Echelle. She told it all, including her return to the street of the Black Cat in the same van with her boxes, her proposal of marriage to Cartouche and Toto's share in the proceedings. The Holy Father listened attentively, and after an extra spell of coughing at the end, inquired gravely:

"And what did Cartouche say to your proposition to marry him?"

"Holy Father, he behaved horridly, and has not

yet agreed, although the poor fellow is eating his heart out for me. He says still, I am far above him—for, you see, Holy Father, as soon as I have it published that I am the giver of ninety thousand francs to the orphans' fund, all Paris will flock to see me act—and then—I shall be billed as Mademoiselle Chiaramonti—cousin of the Holy Father, the Pope. That alone is worth twenty-five francs the week extra."

A crash resounded. The Holy Father's footstool had tumbled over noisily. The Holy Father himself was staring in consternation at Fifi.

"On the bills, did you say?"

"Yes, Holy Father. On the big red and blue posters all over the quarter of Paris."

"It must not be," said the Holy Father, with a quiet firmness that impressed Fifi very much. "How much did you say it was worth?"

"I say twenty-five francs. Duvernet, the manager, says only fifteen."

"Where is this Duvernet?"

"Waiting for me in the anteroom below, Holy Father. He came out to Fontainebleau to try to get me to make the arrangement at once."

The Pope touched a bell at hand, and a servant

appeared, who was directed to bring Manager Duvernet to him at once. Then, turning to Fifi, he said:

"Monsieur Duvernet must give up all ideas of this outrageous playbill—and in consideration, I will secure to you an annuity of twenty-five francs the week as long as you live."

"How good it is of you, Holy Father!" cried Fifi. Then she added dolefully: "But I am afraid if Cartouche knows I am to be as rich as that, I shall have more trouble than ever getting him to marry me. What shall I do, Holy Father, about telling him?"

The Pope reflected a moment or two.

"It is a difficult situation, but it must be managed," he answered.

Then Fifi, eager for the Holy Father's approval of Cartouche, told many stories of his goodness to her in her childish days—and presently Duvernet was announced.

Duvernet was an earnest worshiper of titles and power, but not to the extent of forgetting his own advantage; and, although on greeting the Pope he knelt reverently, he rose up with the fixed determination not to do anything against the interests of

the Imperial Theater, or its manager, not if the Pope and all the College of Cardinals united in asking him.

"Monsieur," said the Holy Father, gently, but with authority: "This young relative of mine tells me that her salary is to be increased fifteen francs the week at your theater if her name and relationship to me shall be exploited. I offer her twenty-five francs the week if she will forego this. It does not appear to me to be proper that such exploitation should take place."

Duvernet bowed to the ground.

"Holy Father," said he, with deepest humility, "it rests with Mademoiselle Chiaramonti." And he whispered to Fifi behind his hand, "Thirty francs."

"Thirty francs!" cried Fifi indignantly, "only just now you were telling me that it was not even worth twenty-five francs!"

The Holy Father's voice was heard—gentle as ever—

"Thirty-five francs."

Duvernet, being found out, and seeing that he had the Supreme Pontiff on the other side of the market, concluded it was no time for diffidence, so he cried out boldly:

"Thirty-eight francs."

There was a pause. Fifi looked toward the Holy Father.

"Forty francs," said the Holy Father.

Duvernet, with the air and manner of a Roman senator acknowledging defeat, bowed superbly and said:

"Your Holiness wins," and backed toward the door.

Fifi turned to the Pope, and said with shining eyes:

"Holy Father, I thank you more than I can ever, ever say—I promise never to do anything to dishonor the name I bear. And Duvernet," she added, turning to where the manager stood with folded arms and the expression of a martyr: "Recollect, even if it is not put on the bill that I am the granddaughter of the Holy Father's cousin, that I am still valuable. Did I not win the first prize in the lottery? And did I not give ninety thousand francs to the soldiers' orphans? And shan't I be thanked in person by the Emperor and Empress? Match me that if you can. And besides, have I not the finest diamond brooch in Paris?"

"If it is diamond," said Duvernet under his

breath, but not so low that the Holy Father did not hear him. However, without noticing this, the Pope asked of him:

"Monsieur, will you kindly give me your opinion of Monsieur Cartouche, whom my young relative wishes to marry?"

Duvernet paused a minute, trying to find words to express what he thought of Cartouche, but in the end could only say:

"Your Holiness, Cartouche is—well, I could not conduct the Imperial Theater without Cartouche. And he is the most honest and the most industrious man I ever saw in my life."

"Thank you, Monsieur. Good afternoon," said the Pope, and Duvernet vanished.

"My child," said the Holy Father, after a little pause: "What is this about your having the finest diamond brooch in Paris?" As he spoke, the Holy Father's face grew anxious. The possession of fine diamonds by a girl of Fifi's condition was a little disquieting to him.

"It is only paste, Holy Father," replied Fifi, whipping the brooch out of her pocket. "I always carry it with me to make believe it is diamond, but it is no more diamond than my shoe. Duvernet

thinks it is diamond, and I encouraged him to think so, because I found that it always overawed him. Whenever he grew presumptuous, all I had to do was to put on this great dazzling brooch and a very grand air, and it brought him down at once."

"My child," said the Holy Father—and stopped.

"I know what you would say, Holy Father—I am deceiving Duvernet—but that is what is called in the world—diplomacy."

With that she handed the brooch to the Holy Father. It was a brazen imposture, and the Pope, who knew something about gems, could but smile at the size and impudence of the alleged stones.

Then Fifi said timidly:

"Holy Father, how about Cartouche? I so much want to marry Cartouche!"

"Then," said the Pope calmly, "you can not do better than marry Cartouche, for I am sure he is an honest fellow, and loves you, and you must bring him out to see me."

"Oh, Holy Father," cried Fifi joyfully, "when I bring Cartouche out to see you, you will see what a *very* honest, kind man he is! But you must not expect to see a fine gentleman. My Cartouche has

the heart and the manners of a gentleman, but he has not the clothes of a gentleman." And to this, the Pope replied, smiling:

"The time has been when I was a poor parish priest, that I had not the clothes of a gentleman, so I can feel for your Cartouche. So now, farewell, and be a good child—and forty francs the week as long as you are simply Mademoiselle Fifi. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Holy Father, and I can not thank you enough, and I am the happiest creature in the world."

And then Fifi fell on her knees, and received a tender blessing, and went away, thinking with pride and joy of the visit she was to make after she was married to Cartouche.

"I know the Holy Father will like him," she thought, as she tripped along the grand avenue toward the town. "The Holy Father is kind and simple of heart, and honest and brave, and so is Cartouche, and each will know this of the other, so how can they help being satisfied each with the other?"

Thinking these thoughts she almost walked over Duvernet, who was proceeding in the same direction.

Duvernet's manner had undergone a complete change in the last half-hour, and he spoke to Fifi with an offhandedness which took no account of her ruffled feathers when he addressed her by her first name.

"Fifi," said Duvernet, "for it is all nonsense to call you Mademoiselle Chiaramonti now—Fifi, I say, I will give you fifty francs the week on the strength of having drawn the first prize in the lottery, of having given your fortune to the soldiers' orphans and of being thanked, as you will be, by the Emperor and Empress in person. It is a liberal offer. No other manager in Paris would do so well."

"And my art?" asked Fifi, grandly.

"Oh, yes, your art is well enough, as long as I have Cartouche to manage you. With the Pope's forty francs the week you will be the richest woman in our profession on the left bank of the Seine."

Fifi considered a while, walking briskly along. Ninety francs the week! What stupendous wealth! But it would never do to yield at once.

"And I am to have all of Julie Campionet's best parts? And you are to be on my side in all my quarrels with Julie?"

"Certainly," replied Duvernet. "You don't suppose I would stand on a little thing like that? Now, you had better take what I offer you, or Julie will certainly spread the report that you wished to come back to the Imperial Theater and I would not let you."

"Bring the contract to me this evening," replied Fifi.

"And to-morrow it is to be published in the newspapers?"

"Of course. In all the newspapers. But, Monsieur, there are some things you must not expect of me now as formerly, such as constructing togas for you out of my white petticoats, and making wigs for you out of tow. I am above that now."

"So I see—for the present—" replied Duvernet, laughing disrespectfully, "but just let Julie Campionet try her hand at that sort of thing in your place, and you would burst if you did not outdo her. Come, here is the diligence. In with you."

Fifi got back to her old quarters in time to prepare supper again for Cartouche. This time they had cabbage-soup and a bit of sausage.

Poor Cartouche, who had alternated between heaven and hell ever since Fifi's return, was in

heaven, sitting opposite to her at the rickety table, and eating Fifi's excellent cabbage-soup. She herself fully appreciated their menu.

"When I was with the Bourcets I could not eat their tasteless messes," she cried. "No garlic, no cabbage, very few onions—and everything sickly sweet. No, Cartouche, one must live as one has lived, and one must have a husband who likes the same things one likes, so that is why I am marrying you a week from Thursday."

"Fifi," said Cartouche, trying to be stern, "haven't I told you to put that silly idea out of your head?"

"Yes, but I haven't though, and to-day I went to Fontainebleau to see the Holy Father, and—now listen to reason, Cartouche—he told me to marry you. Do you understand?"

This was the first Cartouche had heard of the visit to Fontainebleau. Fifi described it glibly, and if she represented the Holy Father as urging and commanding her marriage to Cartouche much more strongly than was actually the case, it must be set down to her artistic instinct which made her give the scene its full dramatic value. When she paused for breath, Cartouche said, glumly:

"But the Holy Father hasn't seen me and my stiff leg yet."

"Oh," cried Fifi, "I am to take you out to Fontainebleau as soon as we are married."

"You are afraid to show me before we are married."

"Not in the least. I told the Holy Father that you were neither young nor handsome; for that matter, the Holy Father himself is neither young nor handsome. But I am glad you have at last agreed that we are to be married—not that it would make any difference."

"You have not married me yet," Cartouche weakly protested, gazing into the heaven of Fifi's eyes, while eating her delicious cabbage-soup.

"Have you no respect for the Holy Father?" asked Fifi, indignantly.

"Yes, but suppose the Holy Father to-day had advised you to marry some one—some one else—Louis Bourcet, for example."

"I shouldn't have paid the least attention to him; but it is your duty, Cartouche, when the Holy Father says you ought to marry me to do so without grumbling."

And with this masterly logic, Fifi helped herself to the last of the soup.

CHAPTER XI

BY THE EMPEROR'S ORDER

The next day but one, the mystery was solved of the old lady who gave the ninety thousand francs to the soldiers' orphans' fund. It was not an old lady at all, but the young and pretty actress, Mademoiselle Fifi, who had drawn the great prize in the lottery. She had temporarily retired from the stage of the Imperial Theater, in the street of the Black Cat, but would shortly resume her place there as leading lady. So it was printed in the newspapers, and known in the salons of Paris.

There was very nearly a mob in the street of the Black Cat, so many persons were drawn by curiosity to see Fifi. Fifi, peeping from her garret window, would have dearly liked to exhibit herself, but Duvernet, for once stern, refused to let her show so much as an eyelash, except to those who bought a ticket to see her at the theater, when she was to appear in her great part of the Roman maiden on the Thursday week, the very day she had fixed upon to marry Cartouche.

In this determination to keep Fifi in seclusion until the night of her reappearance on the stage, Duvernet was backed up by Cartouche, who reminded Fifi of the enormous salary she was receiving of fifty francs the week. He had no inkling of the further rise in her fortunes of forty francs the week from the Holy Father.

Meanwhile rehearsals were actively begun, and Fifi had had the exquisite joy of seeing that Julie Campionet was furiously jealous of her. Duvernet, in spite of his unceremonious behavior to her in private, treated her at rehearsals with a respect fitting the place she held on the programme and the stupendous salary she received. All of her fellow actors were either stand-offish with her or over-friendly, but this, Fifi knew, was only a phase. Cartouche alone treated her as he had always done, and even scolded her sharply, saying that in three months she had forgotten what it had taken her three years to learn. But this was hardly exact, for Fifi, being a natural actress, had forgotten very little and had learned a great deal during her exile from the Imperial Theater.

On the morning after the announcement made in the newspapers about Fifi's gift a great clatter was

heard in the street of the Black Cat. An imperial courier came riding to Fifi's door and handed in a letter with the imperial arms and seal. It was a notification that the next day, at noon, an imperial carriage would be sent for her that she might go to the Tuileries and be thanked personally by the Emperor and Empress for her magnificent generosity to the soldiers' orphans.

Fifi turned pale as she read this letter. She did not mind the Emperor, but the Empress. And what should she wear?

While considering these momentous questions, Duvernet rushed into the room. He had seen the courier and suspected his errand.

Fifi, with blanched lips, told him. Duvernet was nearly mad with joy.

"Oh," he cried. "If I was not already married to Julie Campionet and three other women I would marry you this moment, Fifi."

"Marry me!" cried Fifi, turning crimson, and finding her voice, which rose with every word she uttered. "Marry *me! You*, Duvernet! Marry Mademoiselle Josephine Chiaramonti! No! A thousand times no! Julie Campionet is good enough for you."

"I am as good as Cartouche," growled Duvernet, stung by this vicious attack on himself and his wife.

"Monsieur Duvernet," screamed Fifi, stamping her foot, "if you wish me to appear at the Imperial Theater a week from Thursday you will at once admit that Julie Campionet is good enough for you, and that I—I am far too good for you—but not too good for Cartouche."

Duvernet hesitated, but the manager in him came uppermost. He conceded all that Fifi claimed, but on returning to the theater cuffed the call-boy unmercifully by way of reprisal on somebody, after Fifi's exasperating behavior.

That night, at supper, Cartouche was oppressed and depressed by this new honor awaiting Fifi. Presently he said to her seriously:

"Fifi, it's out of the question—your marrying me. Why, you might marry an officer—who knows? Now, Fifi, don't be a fool and insist on marrying me."

"I won't be a fool," answered Fifi promptly, "and I will marry you. The Holy Father told me to, and I expect the Emperor will do the same. At all events, you, too, are to go to the Tuileries."

"I!"

Cartouche fell back in his chair.

"Certainly. I could never get along without you."

"But I couldn't go in the coach with you."

"No. You can be in the gardens, though, and if the Emperor wants you he can send for you."

Cartouche in the end concluded he might as well go, not that he expected the Emperor to send for him, but simply because Fifi wished him to go. And he decided a very important point for Fifi—what she should wear.

"Now, don't wear any of your wild hats, or that yellow gown, which can be heard screaming a mile away. Remember, the Emperor is not a Duvernet, and the Empress is not Julie Campionet. Wear your little black bonnet, with your black gown and mantle, and you will look like what you are—my sweet little Fifi."

This was the first word of open love-making into which Cartouche had suffered himself to be betrayed, and as soon as he had uttered it he jumped up from the supper table and ran to his own garret as quickly as his stiff leg would allow. Fifi caught Toto to her heart in lieu of Cartouche and

murmured, "He loves me! He loves me! He loves me!"

At noon, next day, a splendid imperial carriage drove into the street of the Black Cat and stopped before Fifi's door. Fifi, dressed modestly and becomingly in black, appeared. She could not forbear carrying her huge muff, but as it was the fashion it did not detract from the propriety of her appearance.

The street was full when, assisted by a gorgeous footman, she took her seat in the carriage. Duvernet was a rapturous spectator of Fifi's splendor, and she had the ecstasy of feeling that Julie Campionet was watching the whole magnificent event.

She sat up very straight as she drove through the bright and sunny streets toward the Tuileries. As she entered the great gates she watched for Cartouche, who was to be there. Yes, there he was, looking out for her. Fifi's heart gave a great throb of relief, for she was really frightened half to death, and the nearness of Cartouche made her feel a little safer. The look in his face as their eyes met was full of encouragement—it did not seem to him a dreadful thing at all to meet the Emperor.

This courage of Fifi's only lasted until the carriage door was opened, and she had to alight and walk an interminable distance through miles of gorgeous rooms, of mirrors, of paintings, of gilding, and, worse than all, in the company of the very polite old gentleman-in-waiting who escorted her.

She knew not how she found herself in a small boudoir, and presently the door opened and the Emperor and Empress entered, and at the first word spoken to her by the Emperor, as with the Holy Father, fear instantly departed from her, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world for her to be there.

Fifi made a very pretty bow to both the Emperor and Empress. The Empress seated herself, and her kind eyes, her soft Creole voice, her charming grace, captivated Fifi, as it had done many of the greatest of the earth. But when the Emperor spoke—ah, Fifi was one of the people, after all—and like the old moustaches in Cartouche's regiment, she would have died for the Emperor after having once seen him. He said to her:

"The Empress and I wish to thank you for your splendid gift to the soldiers' orphans, Mademoiselle.

Was it not your whole fortune? For I remember well hearing that you had drawn the grand prize in the lottery."

"Yes, Sire," replied Fifi, "but I am still well off."

"I am glad to hear it, Mademoiselle."

"Sire, the manager of the Imperial Theater is to give me fifty francs the week, and the Holy Father, to whom my grandfather was cousin, is to give me forty francs the week as long as I live; that is, if I do not put it on the bill-boards that I am Mademoiselle Chiaramonti, granddaughter of the Pope's cousin."

"It was I who caused that relationship to be established, after having heard your name, the evening that my good friend Cartouche invited me to see you act. But what ingenious person was it who dreamed of putting your relationship to the Pope on the bill-boards?"

"I and our manager, Monsieur Duvernet, Sire. Monsieur Duvernet knows how to advertise."

The Emperor laughed a little.

"I should think so. I have met Monsieur Duvernet—the same evening, Mademoiselle, that I had

the pleasure of seeing you act. So the Holy Father interfered with yours and Duvernet's little plan—ha! ha!"

"Yes, Sire. First, Monsieur Duvernet said he would give me twenty francs to be billed as the Pope's cousin, and the Holy Father said he would give me twenty-five francs to be billed simply as Mademoiselle Fifi. Then Monsieur Duvernet said thirty francs, and the Holy Father said thirty-five; and Monsieur Duvernet said thirty-eight, and the Holy Father said forty. That was such a large sum, Sire, that Monsieur Duvernet could not meet it."

"And what does our friend Cartouche say to this? Cartouche," he explained to the Empress, "is my old friend of Lodi, the only man who crossed the bridge before me, and he came to see me and consulted me about this young lady's fortune."

"Cartouche, Sire, does not know it."

"Why? Have you fallen out with Cartouche?"

"Oh, no, Sire. Cartouche and I are to be married a week from Thursday," replied Fifi, smiling and blushing.

"Then explain why he does not know about the

Pope's forty francs, since you are to marry him so soon?"

"Because, Sire, Cartouche does not want to marry me—I mean, that is, he thinks he is not young enough or rich enough or well-born enough for me—which is all nonsense, Sire."

"Yes—I know something about you and Cartouche."

"And I never could have married him if I had not got rid of my money. But I am afraid if Cartouche knows of my forty francs the week he will make a difficulty."

"In that case we must not let him know anything about it. But I was told by my arch-treasurer Lebrun that a marriage had been arranged for you with a young advocate here whom Lebrun knows well, by name Bourcet. What becomes of that?"

Fifi smiled and blushed more than ever, and remained silent until the Empress said, in her flute-like voice:

"Perhaps, Mademoiselle, you could not love him."

"Your Majesty, I hated him," answered Fifi, with the greatest earnestness. "He was the most correct

person and the greatest bore in the universe. Unlike Cartouche, he thought himself much too good for me, but was willing to take me on account of my hundred thousand francs. At first I tried to frighten him off."

"How, Mademoiselle?" asked the Emperor, now laughing outright.

"Sire, by — by — buying things. Dreadful clothes, and—and—monkeys, but I was afraid of the monkeys and would not keep them—and a blue satin bed made for the Empress—"

"I know that diabolical bed—so they swindled you into buying it?"

"No, Sire, it was only a way of squandering money and frightening that ridiculous Louis Bourcet. And—I made love to him very outrageously —which was nearly the death of him. Louis Bourcet is not the sort of a man to be first across the bridge of Lodi. The only way to have got him across would have been to carry him. But in spite of all I could do he would have married me if I had not found a way to get rid of my money."

"Tell me how you contrived to get your money in your own hands?"

Then Fifi told about putting the box of old shoes

in the bank and sewing the money up in the mattrees, just as she had told the Pope, and both the Emperor and the Empress laughed aloud at it. And Fifi further explained how Cartouche's letter had showed her the way to make a good use of her uncomfortable fortune instead of merely throwing it away.

The Empress then asked, in her charming manner, some questions about Fifi's life, and both the Emperor and Empress seemed excessively amused at the simplicity of Fifi's answer.

"I shall have to tell Lebrun, the arch-treasurer, about this," cried the Emperor; "and now, what can I or the Empress do for you?"

Fifi reflected a moment.

"If you please, Sire," she replied after a moment, "to send for Cartouche—he is just outside in the gardens—and order him to marry me a week from next Thursday. For, if he should happen to find out that I have forty francs the week as long as I live, there's no telling what he will do, unless your Majesty gives him positive orders."

The Emperor rang, and his aide appearing, he was directed to find the fellow named Cartouche.

"He is very homely and has a stiff leg," said Fifi, by way of description of her lover.

While Cartouche was being found, the Emperor, after his wont, began to ask Fifi all manner of questions, especially about the Holy Father, and listened attentively to her replies. His only comment was:

"A good old man, a dreamer, who lives in his affections."

When Cartouche was ushered into the room the Empress spoke to him with the greatest kindness, but the Emperor, frowning, said:

"Mademoiselle Fifi tells me she has a mind to marry you a week from Thursday, and you are hanging back."

"Sire," replied Cartouche, respectfully, but without the least fear, "I am too old and ugly for Fifi, and I have a stiff leg. Your Majesty knows what I say is true."

"No, I do not know it, and Cartouche, obey what I say to you. A week from Thursday, or before, if Mademoiselle Fifi requires, you are to be ready to marry her, and if you balk the least in the world I shall have a sergeant and a file of soldiers to persuade you. Do you understand?"

"Oh, Sire," replied Cartouche, with shining eyes, "how good of your Majesty to command me! For, otherwise, I never could have thought it anything but wrong to tie Fifi to me for life. But one must obey the Emperor."

"Yes," cried Fifi, quite forgetting herself in her joy, "one must obey the Emperor."

And then the Emperor kissed Fifi on the cheek, and pulled Cartouche's ear, saying to him:

"You mutinous rascal, you would disobey your Emperor; but remember the sergeant and the file of soldiers are ready when Mademoiselle Fifi calls for them. So, good by, and good fortune to you both, and if anything befalls you, you know where to find your Emperor."

The Empress gave Fifi her hand to kiss and said, smiling:

"I shall not forget a little present for your wedding," and Fifi and Cartouche went away, the two happiest creatures in Paris.

Fifi returned in the imperial carriage, and Cartouche returned on the top of an omnibus, but each of them was in a heaven of his own.

Fifi reached home first, and when Cartouche ar-

rived she was hard at work on a white bonnet for her wedding.

"Cartouche," she cried, as he opened the door, "there are a million things to be done if we are to be married a week from next Thursday."

"I know it," answered Cartouche, "and Fifi—you need not send for the sergeant, I think."

Fifi threw herself into his arms. She was bubbling over with joy. Cartouche's saturnine face was more saturnine than ever. He kissed Fifi solemnly, and broke away from her. It was too much joy for him.

The preparations for their wedding were simple enough, as became an insignificant actress and a poor actor, whose home was to be in two little rooms very high up; for Fifi, having been bred under the tiles, declined to come down lower, in spite of her improved fortunes. They had a great many rehearsals at the theater, too, and Cartouche, as stage manager, had lost none of his strictness, and ordered Fifi about as peremptorily as if he were not to be married to her on Thursday. Fifi obeyed him very sweetly and had a new humility toward him.

All of their fellow actors showed them great

good-will—even Julie Campionet, who behaved in the most beautiful manner, considering what provocation Fifi had long given her. Everybody connected with the theater gave them a little present—poor and cheap enough, but rich in kindness. Even the old woman who lighted the theater brought Fifi a couple of pink candles for a wedding present, and Fifi thankfully accepted them.

Two days before the wedding came three splendid presents—a fine shawl from the Empress, a watch from the Emperor and a purse from the Holy Father. Fifi was charmed, and took up so much time at rehearsal in exhibiting these gorgeous gifts that she failed to answer her cue, and subjected herself to a fine, according to the rules of the theater, which Cartouche rigorously exacted.

Fifi worked so hard preparing for her wedding on the Thursday morning, and her return to the stage on the Thursday evening, that the hours flew as if on wings—and the day came almost before she knew it.

The morning was fair and bright as only May mornings can be fair and bright. Fifi and Cartouche, with Duvernet and Julie Campionet, now completely reconciled with Fifi for a short

time, walked to the *mairie* and then to the parish church, and were married hard and fast. From thence they went to a cheap café to breakfast, and Duvernet, in honor of the occasion, had a two-franc bouquet of violets on the table. All of the waiters knew that two of the party were bride and groom, but Cartouche was so solemn and silent, and Duvernet so gay and talkative, that everybody supposed Duvernet the happy man and Cartouche the disappointed suitor.

It was then time for the rehearsal, which lasted nearly all the rest of the day, Cartouche being unusually strict. When the curtain went up in the evening never was there such an audience or so much money in the Imperial Theater. The best seats were put at the unprecedented price of two francs and a half, and Duvernet gnashed his teeth that he had not made them three francs, so great was the crowd. The play was the famous classical one in which Duvernet had worn the toga made of Fifi's white petticoat. This time he had a beautiful toga, bought at a sale of third and fourth-hand theatrical wardrobes, and it had been washed by Julie Campionet's own hands.

Everybody in the cast made a success. Even

Cartouche as the wounded Roman centurion of the Pretorian Guard, got several recalls, and he was no great things of an actor. Duvernet covered himself with glory, but all paled before Fifi's triumph. Never was there such a thunder of applause, such a tempest of curtain calls, such a storm of bravos. Fifi palpitated with joy and pride.

When at last the performance was over, and Cartouche and Fifi came out of the theater into the dark street, under the quiet stars, Fifi said, quite seriously:

"Cartouche, my heart is troubled."

"Why, Fifi?"

"Because I am not half good enough for you. I am only Fifi—you know what I mean. I am ashamed that I am not something more and better than merely Fifi."

And Cartouche, who was usually the most matter-of-fact fellow alive, replied softly:

"As if a rose should be ashamed of being only a rose!"

BY

MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL

FRANCEZKA

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